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ESSAYS ON LIFE

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Shelley: The Man and the Poet
What is the Kingdom of Heaven?

ESSAYS ON LIFE

BY

A. CLUTTON-BROCK

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
J. L. HAMMOND

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PREFACE

NONE of the essays included in this volume have been printed before. Many of them, I know, were not written by my husband for publication, but for the sheer pleasure of the writing. I can remember the zest with which he read some of them aloud to me and to one or two of his most intimate friends. But, just because they were not meant for the public eye, they reflect, better than most of his more formal work, his many-sidedness and vivacity. To me at any rate they recall the delight and charm of his varied conversation, and the way in which his mood would pass from irony to sympathetic insight, from high seriousness to light mockery.

Several of these essays had been left uncorrected, unpunctuated, often barely decipherable and with pages disarranged, just as they had been hurriedly typed out by my husband's

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own hand on a worn-out typewriter. That I have been able to get them into a form that could be given to the world is mainly due to the infinite pains devoted to preparing them for the press by Canon Streeter and Mr. Norman Ault, to whom I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude.

EVELYN CLUTTON-BROCK

INTRODUCTION

IT is possible to have known a man long and well, and yet to find a difficulty in summoning his complete image before the mind. Some play or turn of his features will escape you. Nobody who knew Arthur Clutton-Brock even slightly could ever have found this difficulty. In one flash he would return from the shadows ; his look, his smile, his movements, the bursting pleasure with which he would share his newest enthusiasm with anybody who crossed his path, his brilliant raillery on men and manners, and the sudden flight of phrase by which he would bring before you some new and significant aspect of life. This hold on our memory is part of his power, for he had a vitality that mastered you, as you are mastered by a picture or a book that is intensely but not arrogantly alive. For there was no arrogance in Clutton-Brock's nature. He enjoyed argument, he pushed his point with vigour, with tenacity, with persistence ; he liked sharp

and violent verdicts; he was often wilfully and boyishly perverse. But nobody ever saw him overbearing or imperious, giving himself airs or taking his stand on his prestige. His power over our memory is not the tyranny of a masterful man; it is the spell of a very lovable man whose vital force is still unspent.

This vitality was at once an obstacle and an aid to his success as a writer. He was too impulsive, too rapid, too versatile in the play of his mind to endure the hard mechanical discipline that is needed for the preparation of a large book. His book on William Morris is a masterpiece as a revelation of a man and an age, but it was kept in a short compass. He wrote several books in which his readers will find profound, penetrating, and original ideas and passages with the beauty and simplicity that distinguished his style, but those who knew his range of mind regarded them as studies for a great work that he might write one day. Perhaps, if he had lived, the interpretation of religion, at which he worked with such ardour in his last years, would have proved his master-task. It would have been a fitting crown to his effort to give unity to the aims and life of man, to put art and music

in their true setting, and to show that virtue and beauty were aspects of one another.

But this vitality gave him his rare power in the medium that he found for his talents. For twenty years of his life he was pouring out his ideas in newspapers or reviews. I need not now speak of the distinction that marked his work, of its wide and generous atmosphere, of the simple and delicate beauty of his style, of the skill with which he could take any topic into large surroundings of fancy and imagination, of the ease with which he could summon to his canvas the great ghosts of history. He had his failures, like everybody else. The journalist does not live who is not sometimes monotonous and flat, and a rapid worker who seeks simplicity may easily slip into the commonplace instead. But when he was at his best, using all his gifts of gentle irony, subtle insight, meditative wisdom, and free and bold interpretation, he had not his equal.

His work had two characteristics that were connected with his temperament and training. It has been well said that education enables a man to use the experience of the past. Clutton-Brock was in this sense a remarkably

well-educated man. Though he read widely and eagerly, there were men who knew more than he knew about the several subjects that he discussed; but there was nobody who was better able to absorb all that he learned or divined of the life of the past and to make it part of his own spiritual experience. Thus he had learnt more than many men who knew more than he knew, and as his vivid sympathy gave him an intimate insight into other minds, and his remarkable memory kept all his impressions, he assimilated in this way composure and wisdom and a common sense that was a constant surprise to admirers who liked best his more wayward moods. This quality in his book on Shelley outraged the solemn spirits who hold that sense is out of place when you are speaking of the gods.

The second characteristic was his power of putting himself into intimate sympathy with readers of every sort. Men and women who never gave a thought to the topics that most often engaged his mind read what he wrote with the keenest enjoyment. This was because his catholic nature, his hatred of the spirit and teaching of Calvin in art or letters, in politics or religion, gave a universal quality

to his writing. There was nothing aloof or esoteric or superior or exclusive about him; whoever you might be, you felt as you read his articles that he spoke to you as *curarum particeps*. Clutton-Brock said of Morris that when he told the world how to be happy he spoke with authority because, unlike so many philanthropists, he was himself a happy man. "The world distrusts philanthropists and reformers of all kinds because they do not in their own lives convince the world that they are good judges of happiness." In this Clutton-Brock resembled his master. Fortune, let us admit, had treated him kindly, for he escaped some of the anxieties that beset a writer's early path. He was happy in all the important associations of life: he was happy at Eton and at Oxford, and he was supremely happy in his marriage, and the life and promise of his home. He had an unqualified and disinterested happiness in his work, for he enjoyed it more than the fame it brought him. He was the antithesis of Hudson, who was unhappy even when writing a masterpiece. "I am glad you like *Green Mansions*," said Hudson to a friend, "I can only remember the pain with which I wrote

it." Clutton-Brock enjoyed writing, whether the occasion were small or great, just as he was equally happy giving his ideas to the Farncombe Labour Party or to an audience of Bishops in the Church House. It was because he found such a zest in the mere expressing of his ideas that he escaped one of the pitfalls of his world.

Men who speak to the world, whether with pen or brush or chisel, make their mark and do their work by taking and holding the attention of an audience. It is sometimes said of them that they are more apt than other men to be morbidly sensitive and bitter. This is not surprising, for they are subject to a special strain. In most circumstances a man may die obscure and yet die knowing that he has lived a useful life. But if your life's work is to tell the world something and the world will not listen, the smart of failure is worse than balked ambition: it is the illusion that your whole life is wasted.

Clutton-Brock put all his vitality into telling truth to the world: truth in every mood and tone, impulsive truth, provoking truth, ironical truth, quiet, patient, and steady truth. Yet throughout his life he was the

least bitter and the most generous of men. His brilliant wit was the more delightful because there was about it no suspicion of envy or malice. Some men seem generous until they laugh, when you catch an undertone of spite or meanness. Clutton-Brock laughed like a boy. For to the day of his death he was a boy in the spontaneous candour of his enthusiasms, and the unspoilt freshness of his feeling for life. These qualities were half the secret of his power. It sometimes happens that rage or pity will enable a small man to write like a great man. Clutton-Brock was a perfect writer of his kind because he was such a splendid human being. If the hour demanded satire or invective or ridicule, his pen was as ready a weapon as any others, but his best prose had something much rarer than sting or thrust; it was the persuasive musing of a magnanimous nature, and all that was magnanimous in his audience responded to it.

This quality was seen at its best in the series of articles he wrote on the war. Perhaps nowhere will his readers find better displayed the philosophy that made him a Socialist without a trace of self-righteous-

ness, a rebel without a trace of bitterness, an art critic without a trace of pedantry, and a writer without a trace of affectation. His noble language rang strangely in the ears of Europe, when the war had filled Jingo and pacifist alike with its blind bitterness, but it will ring proudly in the ears of England when she stands among the nations to ask for pardon at the Judgment Day.

J. L. H.

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ESSAYS ON LIFE

I

Home

WHEN Christ said, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head," He expressed suddenly and passionately man's sense of his homelessness in the world. Animals perhaps are at home in it, but man is not except at heaven-sent moments; he is half of it and half not, and the more he is of it the less he can be at home in it. Not a worldling is satisfied with the world:

> "Ludisti satis edisti satis atque bibisti
> Tempus abire tibi est."

That is what the worldling feels about himself; and he has no home to go to from this unhomely place of pleasure. He does not belong to the universe, and only the universe can be man's home.

The last, the highest religious effort, is to make a home of the universe, now and for

ever, here and through all infinity. That is what men mean when they speak rather dully of consenting to life. But religion aims at more than consent. We do not accept our country, the place where we were born or the fields where we played as children. There we were born and there we played :

> "Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine cunctos
> Ducit et immemores non sinit esse sui."

Marcus Aurelius put this religious effort into words once and for all when he said, "The poet hath said, Dear City of Cecrops ; and shall we not say, Dear City of God." He meant that we must aim at becoming citizens of the universe ; and that was to him not a mere humanitarian platitude, it was something that he desired with a pang of home-sickness, as Christ desired it. We can see the glory of the universe ; we can remake it in art ; yet at the height of our joy in it there comes that sudden pang of home-sickness. We seem to be strangers gazing at it, and we cannot make it ours. That very power of ours to be aware of it, makes us aware also of a deeper impotence. We can look out upon it, yet we are not of it. Man has not been driven out of the Paradise ; but he seems to himself to have fallen below the power of making it his. He is not an exile,

but something worse, a stranger in what should be his home. It is the very sense that it ought to be his home which makes him believe that he has fallen. There is something in his own mind inadequate to, something that cannot answer to the glory of, the universe outside him ; something restless and trivial that is rebuked by the stars, something feverish and small that cannot give itself up to the spring. Beasts and birds and flowers pursue their business, an earthly business, and are content with it because the earth to them is only the earth ; but to man it is a part of the universe, and there is infinity in all of it, an infinity of which he is aware but which he cannot make his own. And yet at moments he can ; and it is these moments, more than anything else, that cause religion to be incessantly reborn in his mind. Without them he might be merely a philosopher, content to exercise his intelligence upon the nature of things and the order of the universe. But having known them, he desires to be, in action and feeling, that which he conceives in thought. It is nothing to him that he can grasp something of the truth of things, unless he can himself be a part of it ; for he has been a part of it and then again fallen away from his fellowship. He has understood more than any pure philosopher, and then

ceased to understand. The philosopher can put his understanding into words and so preserve it for ever; but this other understanding, being of man's whole being and not only of his intellect, cannot be put into words. At best it can only be expressed through memory and indirectly in music or poetry, and that with some wistfulness and pain. The artist, in the practice of his art, is always an exile singing the songs of Zion in a strange land. He speaks of moments that are past, and his power is to recapture the memory of them, not them themselves. But it is the effort of religion to make those moments lasting; and that it tries to do by working a change upon the mind of man. A moral change you may call it, but it is more than that. In his morals a man is concerned with his relation to other men, and he may think only of his conduct; but in religion he is concerned with his relation to the universe, and he cannot be content merely to act rightly. For there is nothing that will assure him either that he is acting rightly, or that he knows what right action is. The mere word, ethics, is still stone cold to us, and morality keeps something of its dull original meaning of custom.

The effort of religion is to set us above custom, above the need of reasoning about

ethics. It is to make the art of life second nature to us, so that we may practise it as a flower opens to the sun, so that we may be always and naturally in a right relation to all things. The image of that right relation is the home when all are happy together in it; and when everything in it, the house, the furniture, the garden, all the handiwork of man, is expressive of that happiness. But, even with this, man cannot be content; nor can he attain to this right relation, to this success in the home, without the desire to attain to it with the whole universe. We hear of the religion of the home; but it cannot begin at home, still less can it end there. If it is narrowly domestic, then there is no beauty or joy in it. It becomes close and stuffy and anxious, as if the windows were always shut against the outer air. The religion of the home, if it is to have joy and beauty, must be only the most intense expression of a larger religion. The home itself must arouse a desire to make a home of the universe. Nothing is so beautiful as a light in a cottage window, except the light of the stars; and when we feel the beauty of the cottage light, we know that it is of the same nature as the beauty of the stars; and our desire is to be sure that the stars are the lights of home with the same spirit of home behind them.

II

The Temptation

(St. Luke's Version Rewritten)

"NATURALLY," said Satan, as they stood on the mountain, "With your gifts you would not care for comforts. 'Man shall not live by bread alone'—that was beautifully put. Forgive me for misunderstanding you; but I have to practise a routine. That was a little test that I apply to every one; and you would be surprised to know how few pass it. But, since you have passed it so easily, permit me to give you some advice about your career. I have seen much of the world, and you will not suspect me of flattering you when I say that you have many remarkable gifts, so many indeed that you are in danger of being embarrassed by the very richness of them. Your problem is to know which is the most valuable of all those gifts, and to develop that. In this life men have to do something; the greatest achievement possible to man is to influence the course

of history and of human thought. Believe me; I have met no one in all my experience so capable of that achievement as yourself, and for this reason, the greatest gift of man is personal magnetism; and that you possess in a supreme degree. You may not know it; but I assure you it is so; and I would do you the service of making you conscious of your own power, so that you may rely on it and achieve your aim without any waste of effort."

"My aim?" said Jesus, "What is my aim?"

"Exactly!" answered Satan, "What is your aim? You do not clearly know that yourself yet, and I would help you to the knowledge. You can find your aim only through the exercise of your personal magnetism. Your great gift itself will tell you how to use it. You can make men do and think what you will. You have genius, the genius of a great leader of men; therefore lead them. I can look into the future, and I tell you that the whole world shall be full of your name. There was Augustus: he may give his name to a month; but you shall give your to the ages. I tell you; men will date history from your birth, separating all that came before it from all that shall come after. Where there is one statue to Julius himself, there shall be a thousand to you. Most

wonderful of all, men will make their religion out of a devotion to your person; men in countries you have never heard of, thousands of years hence, will cry, 'Jesus is my all.' And all this shall happen because of that personal magnetism of yours which will persist as if you were still alive and walking and speaking among men. The poets live in their works, it is said; but you shall live in yourself. It is a unique destiny; and I offer it to you, if only you will trust in that unique genius of yours and not be false to it."

But Jesus looked at him, wearily. "When I speak to men," he said, "they seldom understand me. Must that be so always? They listen eagerly to what I say, and I try hard to explain what I mean; but, after all, they ask me questions about myself. I speak to them about what I have seen, the Kingdom of Heaven, call it what you will. It is because I have seen it that I speak about it; because having seen it, my desire is that all men should see it. And you tell me that I shall speak for ever in vain; you ask me to be satisfied with an eternal misunderstanding. You say you know the world, but, like all the rest, you do not understand; and like them you discourage me. You mean kindly, no doubt; but, if I believed that for ages men would talk about me and not about what I try to tell

them, if it were really true that thousands of years hence they would still be saying ' Jesus is my all,' like some of those poor women who follow me ; then indeed I should despair."

As Satan listened, even his well-managed face showed slight and involuntary changes of emotion, first surprise, then disappointment, then the faintest malice ; and then triumph, quickly suppressed. When he spoke again, it was tenderly and sadly. " Believe me," he said, " I did mean kindly ; I wished to discourage you from an impossible task. Men are of such a nature that they will always listen to you without hearing what you say. They will listen to you for your own sake, and not for the sake of what you have to tell them about this Kingdom of Heaven of yours. You may have seen it, because you have a genius for such things ; but you will never make them see it—they will see only you. Whatever you tell them they will believe without understanding it, because you say it. That is what we call the irony of things ; and you too must submit to it. Do not break your wings, beating them wildly against the bars of human stupidity. Only if you learn to smile at it will you be able to master men. And, if they believe every word you say, they will do what you tell them to do. After all, this personal magnetism is no small gift. It is by

means of it that generals win battles and orators sway the crowd. They will; and they make other men obey their will. There is Cæsar, now, on the throne; he wills and, in his own way, he makes men obey his will. He is building up a new order in the world, in spite of all the stupidities of men who do not understand his purpose. Yet he bends them to that purpose. Is that nothing?"

"Nothing at all!" answered Jesus. "Who that has seen the Kingdom of Heaven could wish for anything except that other men should see it? And if they do not see it, what use is it to command them? My will, if you choose to call it will, is that they should see what I see. If once they did so, they would cease to think about me, as I have ceased to think about myself. There is but one thing in life that I fear, and that is despair, despair of making men see the Kingdom of Heaven."

Satan sighed and laid his hand gently on the arm of Jesus. "Believe me," he said, "That way madness lies. If you commit yourself to impossible hopes, you will despair; and then there will be nothing for you, with your temperament, but death. Perhaps there is nothing but death. Perhaps you are but a strange, chance visitant to this world, like a bird driven by the wind from its own country;

and there is no way home except through death. I should be cruel if I indulged you in delusions. I know mankind, and I know that they will never see this Kingdom of Heaven of yours, never understand a word you say about it. Can you face that fact and live? Now listen to me! With all your genius, you cannot show men the Kingdom of Heaven, but because you have genius, and because I too have certain gifts of my own, I can show you the future of your own fame, if you choose to go on living. Look! Here are the creeds men will make about their belief in you; in you, notice, not in your Kingdom of Heaven; there is not a word in them about that. Listen now to this murmur of prayers made to you all through the centuries; they are all to you and about you, not about this Kingdom of yours. That is the result of your personal magnetism. Make the best of that; or else return whence you came and do not waste yourself on this desert of a world. Is it not certain that you, at least, are an immortal spirit; and that Kingdom of Heaven of which you speak is your native home? Are you afraid to return to it the shortest way? Here is the Temple beneath us. You know what that is; and it is the best men can do or ever will do. They will build temples like it to you, if you

choose to go on living; but, if not, in a moment you can be in your own Kingdom, with this poor human flesh, which is not you, broken on the pavement below."

Jesus turned to him then, and said, "Now I know you, for you have really tempted me at last. You are the tempter; you say to me what I have said to myself; you are the weakness within me. All that you said at first was meaningless to me; but this has meaning, it is what I have always feared. And—if there is no Kingdom of Heaven at all?"

Satan nodded eagerly. "Yes," he broke in —"if there is no Kingdom at all except in your unique mind: what then is there for you but death? And since you cannot make anyone see the Kingdom but yourself, is not that some proof that it exists only in your own mind?"

"Have you, then, never seen it?" asked Jesus.

Satan shook his head with a smile. "Never; nor can you make me see it. Believe me, we are all for ever cut off from each other; never for one moment is possible that pouring of mind into mind which you desire. I am cut off from you as you from me; we speak to each other but we do not understand. You call me tempter and I call you visionary, because we do not understand."

"I called you tempter," said Jesus, "because I did not for a moment understand; but now I understand and you tempt me no longer. You say you are cut off from me, but I am not cut off from you, because now, at this moment, I see the Kingdom of Heaven —and you as part of it. Do you say that I am unique? I tell you that all men are what I am; and if I cannot show them the Kingdom of Heaven, the fault is mine as well as theirs. Each of them sees it: I know that each one of them sees it because I see it, but neither I nor any one of us has words for it. What is it like, and to what shall I resemble it? Not to any words of mine or yours or any man's; but it is in the universal heart of man. Satan, Satan, I see it at this moment. Forget that you are Satan and see it with me. Forget your wisdom and all that nonsense you have been telling me. You believed it all then, because you were to yourself only yourself; but now see the Kingdom of Heaven and be one with me and all men. It is not I that speak to you; if it were I, I should be angry with you and still tempted; but I am lost in the Kingdom of Heaven: see it with me and be lost also."

Satan himself was moved. "Did I not say you had genius?" he cried. "You cast

your spell even on me. I, too, might be one of your worshippers, for there is nothing I admire so much as genius. But I do not possess it; and therefore I cannot see your Kingdom of Heaven. Since, then, I cannot help or hinder you, I say 'Farewell.' "

III

The High-Brow and the Tank

IN the streets of London I came suddenly, the other day, upon an allegory unmeant, unconscious, yet so plain to see, that it seemed to be speaking itself to me, and I wondered that every one did not stop to look and listen. It was to the north of the British Museum, where there is a new front, or back—learned, accomplished, but a little prim and lifeless, with its row of Ionic columns, all from a remote and foreign past and all insisting that they are the adornment and outward and visible sign of an inward place of learning. But opposite to this façade, placed there by the Government with some dim notion of pleasing the people and expressing martial triumph, is a tank, looking perfectly itself and all that it means—ugly, disreputable and destructive, with its guns pointed at the façade, and with the words *Ole Bill* painted on it.

Now the allegory which forced itself upon me—for I did not stand there trying to draw

a lesson from this curious contrast and confrontation—was the opposition between culture, scholarship, all that we mean by the word "High-brow," and all that we mean by the phrase "The natural man." The tank was the natural man, as we conceive him now, and as we encourage him in ourselves, man developed through ages into an instrument of offence and destruction, with no expressive purpose whatever, with no art, and a science all directed to the struggle for life, or death; but still[s] with this vestige of humanity in him that he can make a joke about himself. The joke on the tank was reduced to a catchword or symbol; the words *Ole Bill* expressed merely the intention to be funny, or the notion that this is a funny world; but still they were there, irrelevant to the ugly purpose of the tank and all its perverted ingenuity; still they asserted, what the prim façade seemed to deny or ignore, that there is such a thing as laughter in the world; and against the façade they asserted the present moment for whatever it is worth.

It seemed to me part of the allegory and its unconscious irony, that the *State itself* has contrived this contrast—meaning nothing at all, unaware that it is pointing any moral, that it is expressing the division of aims, of personality even, which makes our whole

society so bewildering and futile. For the high-brow and the natural man are not really two different classes of people; they are two tendencies, each of which may be in every one of us—tendencies that ought to work together harmoniously, and correct, and enrich each other, whereas in fact they remain apart and in conflict. That façade—with its refusal to express any practical or structural purpose, its pretence to be a Greek Temple when it is a British Museum, above all its unsmiling monotony—is all that the natural man resents in the word "high-brow"; while the tank, purely practical without a thought of beauty, indeed with a makeshift and contented ugliness, but still with a grin painted across its disreputable face, is all that the high-brow fears and shrinks from in the natural man. And with reason, for, if we were all natural men and nothing more, we should soon make an end of everything worth having and of ourselves as well. But if we were all merely high-brows, well, there would be no one to support us and our museums, and, even if we did not starve, we should, I fear, soon grow weary of our stuffed and dried paradise.

William Morris, among many more violent terms of abuse, had one that was mild but deadly. He would call any work of art that expressed a false and empty notion of beauty

a " silly Heaven " ; and he knew that nothing discourages the mind or wastes it more than these silly Heavens which abound. For whatever our theological beliefs, we cannot do without some conscious or unconscious idea of Heaven ; and our conflict between the high-brow and the natural man comes from the fact that the word " high-brow " does express a kind of silly Heaven against which the natural man rebels without being able to imagine a better heaven of his own. If he could do that, he would not resent the high-brows, and they would soon cease to exist, for there would be nothing in the natural man to frighten or disgust them. But the natural man is frightening and disgusting because he is, unnaturally, inhumanly without an idea of Heaven, and because, lacking it, he is a trouble to himself. What he produces is, not some matter-of-fact and rational, if dull, order of society, but tanks and things like them. He does not follow Voltaire's advice and cultivate his garden—only those who have a rich notion of Paradise do that—he lays waste the gardens of other men and becomes a beast of prey because he fears to be the prey of others. And his suppressed, unconscious, despairing desire for a Heaven he can believe in expresses itself only in that laughter with which he rejects

the silly Heavens that are offered to him and tries to endure the Hell which he makes of this world.

If you think that I myself am here giving way to high-brow gloom, consider all the associations of the words "Ole Bill" painted on a tank, and consider also the fact that we are making little effort to change the world in which all those associations are possible, the world of the natural, or tank-man. And why are we making no such effort, all together and with a fixed resolve that such things shall never happen again? Because we have no clear notion of the kind of world that we would desire instead of this one. All we can do is to laugh at this one and also at the silly Heavens that the high-brows offer to us.

IV

Laughter

THERE is nothing human that man is so proud of as laughter, for he believes that it is wholly human, his own peculiar art practised neither by God nor the beasts. Many things are asserted about God, but they all seem to imply that laughter is not in the divine nature. We are told that God is Love, but never that God is laughter, and, since we prize our own power of laughing so much, this is strange. But it is only since theology became serious and systematic, that laughter has ceased to be imputed to God. Pagan gods laughed, for they were the gods of people who could laugh well; but our religion, however much changed by time and experience, has come to us from the Jews; and they were not happy laughers. In the Old Testament they seem to laugh only when about to massacre their enemies, like Elijah when he twitted the priests of Baal, or like Jehu perhaps when he said, "Come and see my zeal for the Lord"; and in the New, they

do not seem to laugh at all. I cannot think of anyone in the New Testament as ever smiling, except Christ Himself, and His humour is so seriously reported in the Gospels that for nearly two thousand years, Christians, not expecting humour in the divine nature, have never recognized it. St. Paul was a great man but unsmiling, and we can guess what he would have said to anyone who asked him whether his God could laugh like the gods of the heathen. Jehovah did not laugh, and his God was still Jehovah, though denationalized. He and all early Christians would associate laughter in a Jew with hatred and cruelty, and in a Pagan with lust.

For laughter, when the Romans were the masters of civilization, lost all the happiness and subtlety with which the Greeks enriched it; and a joke, as Mr. Gladstone said of a *double entendre*, became something that could have only one possible meaning. Facetious art meant what it means now to the publishers of a certain kind of book and to their customers, and this dull and ugly limiting of laughter set even great Christians like Augustine against it. To them it meant Priapus and the abomination of the heathen, and, if heathen gods laughed, it was because they were devils.

Sexual appetite is certainly ridiculous, and

half our good jokes are about it as well as nine-tenths of our bad ones; but the good jokes laugh at sexual appetite, not with it, and, in spite of their subject they are themselves, like all good art, as chaste as ice. But the bad jokes try to atone for their badness with their subject; they laugh at continence and amuse only those who can be amused by indecent words scribbled on a wall. Such amusement is barbaric, and in the Roman world laughter had lost its universal application and become as barbaric as the laughter of Elijah, though the theme was different. So to the Christian it was an ugly noise that he could not impute to his God.

The great improper jokes, like that of the *Lysistrata*, are about other things beside sexual appetite; it is to them only one example, if the most signal, of that mechanical element which, as M. Bergson says, when it intrudes into life, provokes laughter. Appetite, like rage, Chauvinism, patriotic hatred, and sham religion, is the mechanical; and sexual appetite provokes laughter most of all, because it is least aware that it is the mechanical. But the laughter provoked by sexual appetite is not moral; it is not thinking of wickedness or pained by wickedness, but delighted with the ridiculous. Nor is it immoral either, for if it were, it would ally

itself with the mechanical in its dull, unconscious perversion of the conscious and human. But the dirty laughter of the Romans did ally itself with the mechanical, and itself became mechanical with its formula of obscenity. Therefore, it seemed to the Christians a weapon of the devils against everything human and divine, something secret, phallic, and conspiratorial in its very nature. But that was because they lived in a failing world that wished to laugh, had a memory of the old, large, civilized laughter, but lacked energy to see what was ridiculous in itself, and so could laugh only with the animal in itself.

We have a good deal of that kind of laughter still; we wish to laugh, and we cast about for pretexts, often putting up with the crudest we can find. So laughter with us is still suspect to this extent at least, that not yet do we without a shock think of God laughing. A picture of God or of Christ laughing would not be admitted into any church, nor is there anything like a joke in any of our services. But there is a deeper reason than any disreputable associations why laughter never seems to us divine, why those who value it most still think of it as purely human. For still they prize it as a *pis aller*, as the answer of man to the unanswering inertia of things,

his tit-for-tat to the indifference of the universe. If man and the universe were what man desires, he would have no need for laughter, they think. But both being what they are, those who take most delight in telling ugly truths about both, still remain proud of that delight, proud that they can laugh both at the universe and at themselves. For nothing else can do that; brute circumstance cannot even enjoy its own mechanical cruelty, but man can enjoy it. Even while he laughs at the contrast between his dreams about himself and the facts, between the vows and quarrels of lovers, or the pomp of history and the gradual cooling of the sun, still he remembers that he alone of all the contents of space finds anything ridiculous in it. The sun itself, the source of all life, cannot laugh, nor can the stars in their courses, any more than the gravel on the garden path. But we laugh because our consciousness separates us from all other things; the joke is ours, and nothing else can share it with us or spoil it for us.

Nothing is so impregnable as laughter, for, when it is real, not counterfeit, it is always in the last resort our enjoyment of the joke against ourselves. That man is a being who can enjoy the joke against himself is implied in M. Bergson's very definition of laughter,

for it is our retort to that in ourselves which we most repudiate, that mechanical, which limits us always with an alien law, yet seems to be a part of us. When we laugh we assert ourselves against it, but not as we assert ourselves against things altogether outside us; for the very quality of laughter, even its deliciousness, comes from the fact that it expresses an assertion of ourselves against ourselves, a repudiation by the real in us of the unreal. Its delight is in our power of repudiation, which we have only because we can confess that we ourselves are ridiculous; and in the very confession there is something both purifying and creative; by means of it we put the ridiculous away from us and outside us, and prove our power still to live, and to live more intensely when we are rid of it. Thus, to take a crude and common example, when a man dressed in his best falls down in the street and is made dirty and undignified, all of a sudden he will laugh at his own misfortune. We may explain his laughter meanly and say that he is slavishly siding with those who laugh at him, and hoping so to discount their ridicule; but there is more in it than that. By laughing thus, he asserts himself against the accident, says it is of his body only, not of his mind; there is a self left over that is not made

dirty and undignified by this illustration of mechanical laws. When the disaster is not trivial, when, for instance, it means death, we admire a man's power of laughing at himself, though it is still the same laughter with the same causes; for we see in it a signal example of the victory of the human over the mechanical. It may be that the dying man does not believe that his self will survive death, that he expects death to win a complete material victory over him. Still, the self may win a moral victory with laughter, as in the case of Vespasian, who, when dying, made a last joke out of his own imperial pretensions. When asked how he did, he replied, *Ut puto, deus fio* (I think I am becoming a god). The answer delights us, has even a beauty of its own, because in it the human triumphs over the greatest of all material tyrannies, and more subtly still, over its own attempts to deceive itself.

But laughter is not thus triumphant, is not the last invincible weapon of humanity, unless there is, at least implied in it, laughter at the self. Laughing at others, when it does not imply laughter at the self, has an ugly sound, for it is a siding with brute circumstance; it may please the laughter, but it delights no one else; it is not art, but the expression of fear, itself inhuman and mechani-

cal, the effort to placate an idol with a minor kind of human sacrifice. For when we laugh at the mishaps of others, our pleasure is merely in the fact that it is they who suffer and not we ourselves; we separate ourselves from them and laugh with the mechanical, not at it. But all laughter with the beauty of art in it includes the self in its ridicule. All the best stories delight us because we recognize a humanity which is our own in the absurdities they illustrate; and the delight is in that recognition and in our own power, by laughing, of casting the silly devil of an absurdity out of ourselves. Such laughter is always social, not anti-social, even at its bitterest. Swift even, when he writes of the Yahoos, does not utterly separate himself from them. He could never have written so, if he had not been, as he was, something of a Yahoo, and if he had not known it. His satire is an assertion of the human, even while he seems to deny it. We are Yahoos, he says, all of us, but at least we can know it; and that which can know it is not Yahoo. But when derision does not include the self, then we cannot laugh with it; there is no art in it, no music. It is not true laughter at all, but a mechanical response to a stimulus disguising itself as laughter; and if we share in it, we do so only because we too make the same

mechanical response, and are members of a herd taking sides against the human in ourselves.

There is a beauty of comedy without which it is not comedy at all, but mere sniggering, like that at a dirty story which is only dirty. This beauty, with which we laugh richly and freely, may be remorseless; but it is always remorseless to the generic, not to the individual. For the generic indeed is always the theme of true comedy; we must, if we are to laugh well, recognize ourselves and all men as its butts, because this generic which it exposes in laughter is in all of us, is the unhuman mechanical part of us, which we can repudiate only when we become aware of it. *Così fan tutti* (All women, and all men, behave so). The laughter of the comedy is at their illusion—which is also ours—that their case is special; it exposes the generic just where they think they are most individual, as where they romanticize their appetites. That is where comedy differs from tragedy; for if its theme were the individual, it would be merely tragedy turned cruel, as bad comedy often is. Tragedy is, by nature, concerned with the individual; it asserts the human directly in the triumph of the individual, Hamlet or Lear, over brute circumstance, whether in nature or in man—

a triumph which is not material but spiritual, for it expresses itself only in beauty, a beauty that survives, and even comes of, material defeat. But the triumph in comedy is indirect; for there the individual is asserted in laughter at the generic; and its beauty is in that laughter and in the surprise with which we recognize the generic where we had thought there was only the individual. This recognition is delightful and liberating; for nothing daunts and discourages us so much as to mistake the generic for the individual, the mechanical for the human. Lovers, as we say, often lack the sense of humour, just because they imagine that something which is common to all sex is peculiar to themselves; and that what is happening in them has never happened before in anyone. This sense of uniqueness makes them take heavily many things that they ought to take lightly, such as lovers' quarrels. But if once they can be made to see that all lovers function thus, they are liberated in laughter from the generic tyranny of sex; the self in each of them is set free to see the self in the other, and what had seemed so enormous and menacing as fate goes past them as lightly as thistle-down on the wind. Then they laugh with the true awakening laughter of comedy, for the joke against themselves means

the freedom of the self. And so it is with many things still commonly taken much more seriously than lovers' quarrels, such as the quarrels of nations. If only we could see that in these also, in our heroics and righteous indignation, and belief that we are the chosen people menaced by a foe of peculiar iniquity, that in all perturbations we are functioning as Jews and Gentiles have functioned all through history, then we should be liberated by laughter from many perverse and deluding passions, and, more important still, from their results.

Comedy remains, even for the cynic who can only laugh bitterly at tragedy. He may be always aware that—

> "Medio de fonte leporum
> Surgit amari aliquid."

But still for him laughter is something sweet rising out of the very fountain of bitterness; disillusionment itself is the more delightful the further it is pushed, for still it asserts the human that triumphs in laughter over the shattering of its own illusions.

Not by business or pleasure or a willed habit of cheerfulness can we conceal from ourselves that, with the spring of all delights, there is bitterness mixed. Johnson might say that he was impatient of metaphysical

sorrows when there was hunger in the world; he was impatient because he saw no remedy for them. All men feel them as soon as they have that leisure from the struggle for life which they all desire; for when we are free to enjoy things, we are troubled that they cannot enjoy us. We can sing about them, but they make no answer; we can love them, but cannot even imagine our love returned. There is a gulf between us and all other things known to us which neither thought nor art nor virtue can bridge; we are alone in the universe, not as it seems by any design, but merely because it is so, and because we alone of all things know that we are alone. By our consciousness we make our loneliness, and it hurts us because, being conscious, we would have all other things conscious too.

Then comes laughter, a further consciousness, to give us ease. It tells us that we are crying for the moon, and we get some pleasure, the sweet strain in our bitterness, from the very statement of our folly. The statement gives us pleasure, because it is a further triumph of our consciousness, which refuses to be identified with its own vain desires, and escapes from them in laughter. There was this triumph in Johnson's own contempt of metaphysical sorrows, and it is in all sharp scepticism that finds a witty or lucid expres-

sion. When the sceptic tells us the causes of our religious beliefs, and how different they are from the reasons we give for those beliefs, he is asserting and enjoying the triumph of his consciousness, the human part of his mind, over all the tricks of the unconscious. He, like the writer of comedy, is exposing the generic in man, which makes him think according to a formula in his religion, as it makes the lover act according to a formula in his passion. The joy of scepticism, expressing itself in wit, is the joy of escape from such formulæ by the statement of them. Indeed laughter was a psycho-analysis before the word was known; its method has always been to expose causes where men thought there were reasons, to convince, not by argument, but by laying bare the cause of a false belief or a foolish passion; and still, like psycho-analysis, it implies the existence of an invincible self, an utterly human consciousness, which is there always to analyse and resolve every complexity of illusion.

In fact, laughter is the final art which no analysis can reduce to anything else. Of other arts, other spiritual activities, we can always say that they are "nothing but" this, that, or the other; but laughter remains to say it of them, remains nothing but itself through all the inexorable disillusionments it

inflicts upon the self. Voltaire may begin *Candide* more in sorrow than in anger at the fiction that all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds, but he destroys it with laughter; and his laughter persists among the ruins of that silly dream more immortal than love, because more human. And, laughter, unlike love and all the passions, is impartial; it can confute the solemn pessimist as well as the silly optimist, as in this Misadventure of Mr. Pearsall Smith's, which he has given me leave to print, and which he calls "The Wrong Word."

"We were talking of the Universe at tea, and one of our company declared that he, at least, was entirely without illusion. He had long since faced the fact that Nature had no sympathy with our hopes and fears, and was completely indifferent to our fate. The Universe, he said, was a great mechanism; man with his reason and moral judgments was the chance product of blind forces, which, though they would so soon destroy him, he must yet despise. To endure this tragedy of our fate with passionless despair, never to wince or bow the head, to confront a hostile universe with high disdain, to fix with eyes of scorn the Gorgon face of destiny, to stand on the brink of the abyss hurling defiance at the icy stars, this—this, he said, was his attitude;

and it produced, as you may imagine, a very powerful impression on the company. As for me, I was completely carried away by my enthusiasm. "By Jove, that is a stunt!" I cried. Here, too, laughter exposes the tricks of the unconscious; it makes this passionless despair ridiculous because, in a parody which is scarcely a parody, it shows how much it is enjoyed by the despairer. His rhetoric is a symptom of his enjoyment, and we know that real despair is something that cannot be enjoyed, cannot be rhetorical. There are causes of disbelief as well as of belief, unconscious causes different from the conscious reasons given; and laughter, often more impartial than science itself, scents them in the very style of the disbeliever who sees himself defying the universe as Ajax defied the lightning. For, after all, if nothing has any meaning, why all this to do about it? Why defy the universe, when there isn't one? The right saying for the disbeliever is, *Vive la bagatelle*, not all this rhetoric which is derived from discarded beliefs and which still asks to be admired in a chaos where nothing is admirable.

So much in praise of laughter; but still there is some inconsistency in all our praise and value of it, an inconsistency which remains, no matter what our beliefs or dis-

beliefs may be. I began by saying that laughter is never attributed to God ; and the reason why must now, I think, be clear. God does not laugh because He does not need laughter. He cannot be troubled by the insensibility of a universe which He Himself has created insensible, nor is He limited by any mechanical part of Himself which He would repudiate in laughter. If laughter is a *pis aller*, then it is inconsistent with the very nature of God. And yet, if God does not laugh, there is a human faculty, a human art and delicacy He does not possess. Put it this way ; say that God has no sense of humour, and at once you impute an inferiority to Him which to the devout must seem blasphemous, and to the theologian impossible. For, whatever explanation we may give of it, the sense of humour is to us a positive possession, not merely a *pis aller* or a destructive and defensive weapon.

We dream of laughter and, on rare occasions, we achieve it, the laughter that is positive, not negative, that enriches rather than destroys, that has in it the very beauty not only of process but also of content. And this laughter is to us, in our dreams at least, the highest of all and divine. In fact, earthly laughter then shows likest God when mercy seasons justice, when it is not bitter in its nature but sweet,

when, instead of destroying or disguising, it reveals the truth.

It is rare indeed, hardly ever has it been expressed in words. But though we use all our wit for blame, we know that we shall not be civilized until we can praise wittily. That would seem to us the civilization of the angels —or of God Himself. For then laughter would not be a weapon at all, but the very voice of delighted recognition. And the most beautiful laughter, the only laughter in which beauty is in the content as well as the process, is that in which we recognize something better than we had expected, in which we reject not hopes but fears, in which the dream undreamt of comes true; we laugh that we had not dared to dream it.

It is nothing to the purpose if this laughter does not exist; if it has been achieved in art only once or twice; we can imagine it and desire it and see it still as laughter, making game of the ugly past compared with the lovely present, of fears in the light of hopes come true.

Then our laughter and our value for it no longer seems incompatible with our idea of God.

A good joke outsoars the shadow of its own destructive or protective purpose. Its sudden glory is like the sudden glory of a good

tune. We are sure that God enjoys it, we can dream of jokes that God might make—and then there would be no more unsmiling, indifferent brute circumstance. We could not laugh so unless all things laughed with us, unless we heard the laughter of the spheres and of God Himself.

V

When Voltaire came to Heaven

WHEN Voltaire died at last, after postponing the justice of Heaven for so many years, it was resolved in Heaven to execute that justice with a peculiar solemnity. At the risk even of gratifying his vanity, he could not be allowed to proceed at once to Hell like any common sinner. His sin was *Lèse-Majesté*, it was not that he had disobeyed but that he had disbelieved ; therefore part of his punishment was, in the most tremendous manner possible, to convince him of his error, and, at the very moment when he was overwhelmed by that conviction, to pass sentence upon him. Something, also, was due to the feelings of all the believers whom he had ridiculed. He had not gratified their expectations that he would suffer agonies of remorse and terror on his death-bed ; but now that he was dead at last the terror should be greater still and the remorse yet more vain.

So it was willed that he should appear before the Throne, should see all that he had lost,

should say what he would in his defence—and what could that be, since he had refused to believe in the very God who was judging him ? —should be sentenced, and then sent under escort of the two chief Archangels to the place of his eternal punishment. Such an example had never before been made of any sinner ; and the Cherubim and Seraphim could not disguise their excitement.

They suffered a little disappointment when the prisoner appeared between Gabriel and Michael, each of them holding one of his arms very firmly, and each also carrying a flaming sword. They had heard tales of Lucifer, and they expected this human rebel to be like him, dark and proud and beautiful with more character in his beauty than Gabriel and Michael, whose fair hair, blue eyes, and pink complexions seemed a little insipid to their childish taste. But between the two towering Archangels they saw a creature, very old, very small, very withered, and yet for all his years looking still like a mischievous child of the streets. He was far too small to have any dignity ; nor did he attempt to look dignified. He did not even seem afraid, but peered about him curiously, and whispered something to Michael, upon which the Archangel gave him a warning shake. Then he shrugged his thin shoulders until they were almost higher than

the top of his head, and smiled, just as he smiles in Houdon's statue.

The curiosity of the Cherubim and Seraphim had to satisfy itself for some time with mere staring. It happened that at the moment when Voltaire and his escort reached Heaven, the Celestial Host were singing a hymn in honour of the Supreme Being, which, of course, could not be interrupted. It was one of their longer hymns; and it continued for about three hundred years after Voltaire's entry, when suddenly was heard a sound never heard in Heaven before. It came from the prisoner, and, high, shrill, and weak as it was, could be heard through all the voices and instruments of the unnumbered choir. The hymn ceased in the very middle of a verse; there was silence; and then a voice came from the Throne asking what that sound might be.

As the question appeared to be addressed to one or other of the two Archangels, Gabriel, after looking at Michael, who merely looked back at him and shook the prisoner again, took it upon himself to reply. "It was the prisoner," he said; "the prisoner laughed, All Mighty." At which Voltaire threw back his head, clasped his hands as if in ecstasy, and laughed again still more shrilly. All the host of Heaven craned forward to listen and to watch.

"But what is laughter?" asked the Supreme Being, "and why does he do it?"

Michael almost scratched his head, but remembered in time that he was an Archangel. "Men often do it, All Mighty," he replied; "this one was always doing it."

"Yes, but why do they do it?" The question was asked more sharply; but Gabriel only looked at the prisoner and shook his head. He was not interested in the question, nor was he omniscient; but the Supreme Being was, and remembered the fact. "I know all things," he said, "but here is something I do not know. Will you be good enough to explain how that can be?" But neither Michael nor Gabriel were theologians. They were Archangels of action and remained silent.

Meanwhile the prisoner seemed quite to have forgotten the horror of the situation in which he found himself; again he whispered something to Michael, who again shook him, and said, "Answer yourself. Why do you laugh? Tell him what you mean by it."

All caught their breath at Michael's audacity; and the Cherubim and Seraphim felt that they were being rewarded at last for all that waiting. But the Supreme Being showed no anger. On the contrary, he looked at Voltaire, and said to him, "Yes, what do you mean by it?"

"I laugh, Omnipotence," said Voltaire, "because I am amused."

Again there was silence for a space in Heaven, and then came a further question: "Explain what you mean by that. What is amused?"

"But," cried Voltaire, "what is amusing is amusing. To explain it is to put an end to amusement."

Here the Supreme Being, for once, made a remark what was not original. "But we are not amused," he said. Voltaire shrugged his shoulders, spread out his hands, and smiled with exquisite politeness. The Cherubim and Seraphim felt a strange new pleasure at the manner in which he did it; and every one except Gabriel and Michael was breathless with interest. "That is no answer," said the Supreme Being, "and I insist upon one. Tell me at least why you are amused."

"But how could I help it?" said Voltaire; "consider, I have spent my life in proving the absurdity of that which turns out to be true. What could be so amusing as the absurd which is also the ultimate reality? Many things are absurd on earth, and I supposed they were produced by the folly of men; but they are nothing to this absurdity which is willed by the infinite wisdom of—Yourself. Can you wonder then that I laugh?"

Still the Supreme Being remained slow to anger. " Be good enough to tell us," he said, " what you find absurd in Heaven."

" But figure to yourself," cried Voltaire, now quite at his ease, " you are the Supreme Being. You can do whatever you wish, and you have all eternity to do it in. And now I find that you spend eternity exactly as the Pope said you did. You listen to hymns about yourself for ever and ever. *Mon Dieu!* what a life. Again, can you wonder that I laugh ? "

Still the Supreme Being seemed to be lost in thought. At last he looked up, and said, " Is it pleasant, this laughing ? "

" When the joke is a good one, as now, it is delicious."

" But here," said the Supreme Being, " is a pleasure I do not know."

" Be sure that if you did, you would never listen to all those hymns."

" It is a pleasure I do not know," repeated the Supreme Being, slowly. " I have never been amused ; I have never laughed. When I created the world, I saw that it was good ; but I did not laugh."

" It is partly because we see it is not altogether good that we do laugh," said Voltaire. " That is our consolation."

The Supreme Being continued to pursue his own thoughts. " How," he asked, " can men

have a pleasure that is denied to me; who denies it? It was I who created all things; therefore I created laughter. Yet I do not know laughter. What I do not know does not exist; yet laughter exists. I have seen this creature of mine laugh; and I know of myself, apart from what he tells me, that he takes pleasure in his laughter. I created him, I say, therefore I created his pleasure; but it remains his pleasure, not mine. Is there anyone here who can explain that? Ithuriel!"

Ithuriel was the philosopher among the Archangels, and as soon as he heard his name he came forward eagerly, the Cherubim and Seraphim yawning in anticipation. "I explain the matter thus," said Ithuriel. "To create is to give independent life; it is not to make puppets. No one can create but yourself. This sinner before us has, like all mankind, an independent life of his own, or he could not have sinned; nor could he be justly damned for his sins. Do I make my meaning plain?"

They had all heard this many times before; and the Supreme Being waved to him to continue. "Very well," he said, "since I am understood so far, I will proceed. This independence of life, thus given by your Omnipotent Will to mankind, implies that all men are capable of doing one thing at least

which you cannot do. They are capable of sinning; and you cannot sin."

"Agreed," said the Supreme Being, as Ithuriel paused again for a reply.

"And they are capable of getting pleasure from their sins, a pleasure denied to you because of your sinless nature, and denied, I hope, to all of us." Here Ithuriel looked at the Cherubim and Seraphim, some of whom had begun to fidget.

"This man for instance," he continued, "has taken pleasure in blaspheming against you. You could not take a pleasure in blaspheming against yourself. Nor could any of us, I hope, take a pleasure in so blaspheming. Our pleasure is in singing hymns for ever to your glory, and yours is in hearing them."

"And that is precisely what makes me laugh," said Voltaire.

"That is what makes him laugh," repeated Ithuriel, "because he has an independent life of his own; and his tastes are not our tastes. If his tastes were our tastes, there would never have arisen this necessity for making an example of him. He would have spent his time on earth in endeavouring to imitate those hymns which we sing to you here in Heaven."

"But it was only the bad poets who did that," said Voltaire.

The remark passed unnoticed, and Ithuriel continued, emphasizing each point with a downward movement of his spear. "Since then his tastes are different, one of them is for this laughter which men have made for themselves, sinfully, no doubt."

"But it is not enough to say 'sinfully' and so to dismiss the matter," cried the Supreme Being. "That is so like you, Ithuriel. You are always satisfied with a word. The fact remains that men have produced this laughter, and that I do not know what it is. In so far as they can laugh and I cannot, they are superior to me, the creatures to the Creator. Explain how that can be."

"I say nothing," answered Ithuriel, "except that this possibility must have been contemplated by your Omniscience, when you first contracted the habit of creation. Even you cannot eat your cake and have it, as the prisoner would say. You cannot confer the gift of independent life and then expect it not to be independent."

Ithuriel was privileged, because he was the celestial philosopher. He represented the divine inevitability of the reason. What he said could not be otherwise, and he took every opportunity of saying it. For the others also, it was at least a diversion from the hymns.

The Supreme Being thought again, and then said, "Ithuriel, you are very clever. You have explained very lucidly why I have never laughed; but now I wish to have the pleasure of laughing. Explain to me how I can obtain it."

"I confess," said Ithuriel, "I have no wish to laugh myself. I see nothing to laugh at. Only those who laugh can teach the pleasure of laughing."

Then there happened something utterly without precedent through all eternity. The Creator turned to his creature and said to him, "Will you teach me to laugh?"

"Unlike the excellent Ithuriel," replied Voltaire, "I am no theologian. Yet this occurs to my finite intelligence. Your Omnipotence is possessed of an omnipotent will. I do not think Ithuriel can deny the fact? Very well, then. If your Omnipotence would will for one moment to see your Omnipotence as I see your Omnipotence, your Omnipotence would, I think, laugh, and experience the most exquisite pleasure of laughter. But," he continued quickly, "I must warn your Omnipotence that the experiment will be dangerous. Your Omnipotence remembers what happened to my ancestors when they ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge (for that tale, I suppose, is true like all the rest): they were

exiled from their not very amusing Paradise. It was after that, no doubt, that they laughed. Now, for your Omnipotence to see yourself as I see you, would be to eat of that fruit. It would be to take on my humanity, to take on that very independent life which you conferred on me, a life which, since it is independent, is unknown to you. Therefore the consequences are unknown to you. It might give you a distaste for your own Godhead. Among us men nothing is so powerful as laughter to destroy. Have not I, Voltaire, proved it? Laughter is able to make your omnipotence ridiculous to men. How if it made your omnipotence ridiculous to yourself?"

Here Ithuriel broke in, before the Supreme Being could reply. "The creature speaks the truth," he said. "I see by the inexorable logic of my celestial thought that the experiment *is* most dangerous. If you wish to remain God, if you wish this eternity of ours to endure, I warn you not for a single moment to perform the miracle of becoming as man. I know not what this laughter of his may be; but of my celestial logic I know that it is hostile to our celestial being, far more hostile than all the pretensions of Satan, who never learned to laugh."

"Satan could teach us nothing," said the

Supreme Being. "He never thought about anything but himself; he could talk of nothing else. And here, as indeed everywhere, the proper subject of conversation is My Self. But this man, when he laughs, is thinking not of himself but of Us. It is his contemplation of Us that makes him laugh. Why it makes him laugh I do not know; and I am not omniscient, I am God no longer, unless I do know. There is my logic in answer to yours. Do you, or do you not, wish me to remain God? If you do, you wish me to remain omniscient."

It was as impossible for Ithuriel to resist logic as to refrain from uttering it. He bowed to the divine will, and said, "It is so. You must laugh or cease to be God."

"Very well, then," said the Supreme Being. "It is my will to remain God, even though this new knowledge should dethrone me by my own will. I will eat of this tree of Knowledge. We will all eat of it, Angels and Archangels, Cherubim and Seraphim. Even Gabriel shall eat of it. We will see ourselves as this creature of mine sees us. I will it."

"Spoken like a God," said Voltaire; and then there was silence, for how long, there is no one to tell. But gradually out of the silence there arose a sound, low, almost shy at first, but all voices and instruments shared in it;

and Voltaire himself, who hitherto had admired nothing in all the Glory of Heaven, admired this sound, so unanimous it was in its softness, yet so rich in its diversity, so full of an infinite relish. Voltaire, whom nothing had ever awed before, was awed by its beauty. He, the greatest laugher of all mankind, had never laughed so ; and now he did not laugh but listened. At last it was Heaven indeed to him.

And as he listened it grew louder, and there was not only his own wit in it but qualities he had never dreamed of ; the enormous ribaldry of Aristophanes and the divine mischief of Mozart and the triumphant romping of Beethoven and the sweet malice of Sterne ; all these were not only beautiful, but were beauty itself with the impetus of music and the precision of words. Now the Cherubim and Seraphim laughed by themselves ; and then Gabriel guffawed, and then all the angels, led by God Himself, laughed at their laughter. The loud uplifted angel trumpets blew, laughter ; and the Cherubic hosts in thousand choirs touched their immortal harps of golden wires, to laughter. The appetite grew with the eating, and they created more and more laughter in forms of infinite diversity. They saw more to laugh at than men had ever seen, and their celestial sense of humour waxed

enormous with the expression of it. It was a scherzo that danced and rocked and spread from Heaven into all uncelestial parts of the universe, so that the planets caught the infection and all the electrons and ions. And the fixed stars forgot themselves and began to dance with all their systems round them. And Satan himself forgot his grievances and all his unappreciated virtues ; and said to the other devils that they had all taken themselves too seriously. And they too laughed in answer ; so did all the damned, and cried that they were not damned after all. " What fools we have been," they said to each other ; " and Satan the biggest fool of us all." " I cannot deny it," said Satan, laughing.

Then in Heaven they became aware of this laughter of the damned, and of the extraordinary conduct of the suns and electrons and ions, and laughed the more. There was the freedom of laughter in all things, and all knew their freedom, and laughed at the immeasurable absurdity of the laughing universe. And in that laughter there was an end of the distinction between spirit and matter ; each knew itself to be the other, and laughed at the knowledge. And of the distinction between predestination and free will. For none could help laughing, not God Himself, and yet all willed to laugh. And there was an end of all

other distinctions whatsoever; God was as man, and men were as God; and the loss of distinction went further than that. Gradually the consciousness of all living things, and the very forms of all lifeless things, grew fainter and fainter in the universal rhythm of that laughter. In Heaven there were no longer Angels and Archangels or Cherubim and Seraphim or Voltaire or God Himself; but only the rhythm which became quickened and quickened and became more and more one, not only in Heaven, but through all the universe. It became like the dancing of motes in sunlight, like sunlight itself dancing, except that it was sound and thought and passion as well as light and motion, all fused into one by laughter. That laughter which God had unknowingly created made him also one with all that he had created. And in that oneness all the riddles of the universe were not solved so much as vanished. The universe itself vanished in laughter at itself.

Yet, though there was an end of all things, there was not an end. It had been said that energy was indestructible, but now there was, by the creation of man's mind, added to energy something no less indestructible, something that could itself create as well as destroy. Laughter was in the very nature of the things that were to be, and itself began

to create them. For ages the rhythm of laughter continued as rhythm, as a happiness in the electrons and ions that danced and danced. And, after ages and ages, they danced themselves back into a Universe, danced themselves back into a God who laughed with his Universe and into men who laughed with God and with all things, not merely at him or at each other. The new Universe was made one in its laughter from the first and evolved in this oneness, not in a struggle for life or with the disapproval of God for man, or of men for each other. And there was a new England, really merry at last, and a new Church of England with an Athanasian Creed full of fun instead of threats, and with advertisements in its Church papers now intentionally funny. And a new Aristophanes, a new Mozart and Beethoven, a new Sterne and Voltaire were born, all without bitterness in their laughter, because they knew that all things and God himself laughed with them. But it would take eternity to tell of all that happened in this new eternity, which began through that fortunate failure of the old Heaven to punish the regrettable ribaldry of Voltaire.

VI

The Devil

I HAVE never met the Devil, as I have never seen the Attraction of Gravitation; but I remember very clearly the moment when I was first aware of his presence in the room. It was at a meeting of a philosophical society—no matter where—and we were discussing the nature of evil. We were all eager; we seemed to be hot on the track of evil; the discussion was going well. We had attained to that common mood in which men tell the truth about themselves, in which the truth seems to be present. Suddenly an old gentleman who had not yet spoken rose and said that he wished to draw our attention to one aspect of the question which had hitherto been ignored. There was a theory that evil was really atavism; he did not doubt that many of us were familiar with that theory, but he was astonished that no one had yet mentioned it, and he thought that no treatment of the subject could be exhaustive in which it was not dealt with. As he said these

words I almost saw the devil, not in him, for he was clearly a good old man, so good that he evidently knew less about evil than anyone else in the room ; but I saw that the Evil One had put the thought into his mind, and the words with which he clothed it into his mouth. And from that moment we were off the track of evil. We began to discuss the question whether or no it really was atavism. I believe that we all knew it was not, and we all became dull in discussing what we knew to be nonsense ; but still we discussed it, and that old gentleman felt that he had done his intellectual duty in raising an aspect of the question which hitherto had been neglected.

I went away hating the devil—a thing I had never done before—but possessing a test by which I could recognize him. He had, so far as I was concerned, overreached himself. He had betrayed himself to me. He had shown his hoofs and his tail ; and since then I have often caught glimpses of them. When, after the meeting, I went to bed, I lay awake some hours thinking about this discovery I had made, and how blind I had been not to make it before. Of course the devil would not wish us to find out any truth about the nature of evil. He is the father of lies, as we know ; but his children are of no use to him unless he can get men to adopt them. And lies are not

much use if he can get only habitual liars to tell them ; for then they will not be believed. But this old gentleman was clearly not a liar ; and so the devil whispered his lie into his mind. He did it by telepathy or thought-transference ; the gentleman heard no whisper. He remembered suddenly that there was one aspect of the question which had hitherto been neglected ; and he reminded us of it. It might seem a trivial activity for Satan when there was so much evil to be done all over the world ; but I saw that Satan himself was trivial, and I saw further that he himself believed evil to be merely atavism. He was the father of lies, which means that they were real things to him, and he had a paternal fondness for them, he did not wish them to die homeless, so he found a kind home for this one of them in the mind of this old gentleman.

Satan is trivial. That was my discovery ; and then I saw that it must be true. He is so trivial that he does not even know that he is Satan. To himself he is anything rather than Satan, and he spends his time in calling himself by all sorts of other names, just as he calls evil " atavism," or anything else which it is not. He could not continue to exist if he knew what he was. He is immortal only because the principle of his life is self-deception. Unlike the good angels, he has to struggle for life

and he does it by self-deception. He is the principle of adaptation incarnate, only unlike us he has to adapt himself not to circumstances, but merely to himself. And we are most like him when we also try to adapt ourselves to ourselves, when we also are afraid of a change in ourselves as if it were death, when we call the evil in us atavism, because we do not wish to know what it really is, and so expel it from ourselves. For if it is atavism, it will get rid of itself by a natural process; anyhow, there is nothing loathsome about it or about us. And so calling it atavism, we are able to be comfortable with it, that is to say, with ourselves.

How wrong Milton was about Satan, and his woes and his courage, and his thoughts that wander through eternity, and his "better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven." And he was wrong because Satan had taught him to see sin, in himself and in mankind, just where there was no sin. For Satan believes that sin is something which it would be quite impossible for himself to experience. Sin to him is mental discomfort. That is how he knows it and tests it. The one thing of all others that he has learnt to avoid is mental discomfort. What he does and thinks and feels is to him right, for he has the power of instantly adapting the whole of himself to everything that

happens in his mind ; and that power to him is goodness. He is a most perfect master of protective mimicry because, with his imitation of all the virtues, he deceives himself. And that is why he is so successful in deceiving us. In him great unerring Nature for once goes wrong, and she is still unerring in her perversity because it is complete. He is entirely unaware of the fact that he *is* Satan, because never for a moment does he see any shortcoming or failure in himself, since his adaptation of himself to self is perfect.

Do you suppose that he gazes tragically from far at Heaven and broods over all that he has lost, or that he storms heroically and in vain in his black armour against its shining battlements ? Nothing could be farther from the truth. He himself believes that there is a Satan who does this, for his very conception of evil is discomfort over lost good. And he also believes that there is a Heaven where they will not forgive Satan, from a sense of duty, and because they are shocked by his despairing blasphemies. So he has persuaded us to believe in this Satan, and to be shocked by all human beings who seem to us to resemble him, and also to believe in a Heaven where God and the angels are shocked and do not forgive. But the real Heaven, though he sees it and visits it, is to him not Heaven at all but a very

immoral place, where they will not believe anything that he says to them. Everything there is in very bad taste—the art which is not like any art that he is accustomed to, the philosophy which concerns itself with the Absolute, and, above all, the humour which expresses itself in roars of musical laughter, in scherzos of rhythmical derision at him. For if he has a weakness it is for converting Heaven. There at least he is conscious for once of failure, there he does sometimes tell himself that he is wasting his time when he might be making mankind more comfortable, teaching his own secret of comfort to poor docile humanity. For laughter exists in Heaven if only because Satan exists. It is the manner in which the celestials recognize Satan. They sing their hymns of laughter to him as they sing their hymns of pure beauty to God. And it is because they laugh that he is sure it is not Heaven. For, according to his notion, Heaven must be always perfectly serious; above all things it would take him quite seriously. Men are sinful and imperfect creatures to him because they do not always take him quite seriously. There is nothing he deplores so much as their laughter, and he would cure them of it if he could. A joke in season, he says, a joke in good taste, may be permitted, because this is an imperfect

world, and men must, while they are in it, be allowed some innocent fun. But laughter at serious things, above all at him, is, he thinks, the very invention of the devil—or would be if the devil existed, though, if we are charitable, we shall perhaps think of it merely as atavism, like the belief in the devil. At any rate one can tell permissible humour from that which is not permissible, if one has good taste. And there is no one in the universe, except perhaps the God he has never seen, who has such perfect taste as he has.

But this laughter of Heaven is laughter at serious things, at all the things which he says in the hope of converting Heaven, at the words in season which he, with perfect tact, tries to whisper to them. For he will take one of the archangels aside and suggest to him that this celestial music may be clever, but it is quite wanting in good old-fashioned melody. For his part he does not pretend to be a connoisseur, but he knows what he likes. He remembers how he used to sing "Hark! hark, my soul!" at his mother's knee (he never had a mother, but he has long ago persuaded himself that she taught him all the worst nonsense that he believes). And this music, if one can call it by that name, would never bring the tears to the eyes like the simple tunes of his childhood.

Or he, very unfortunately, finds Ithuriel in an idle moment, and asks him whether he really thinks that all this talk about the Absolute has any useful purpose. He is not a philosopher himself, but he takes an intelligent interest in such things, so long as philosophy deals with the real problems of life, and it appears to him that Darwinism has made all such discussions obsolete. The problem for all life is adaptation; even men have discovered that, and they are making really wonderful strides since they gave up talking about the nature of the good and the beautiful and the true, and set themselves to the task of conscious, instead of unconscious, adaptation. They have indeed a new conception of God as the stream of tendency in things, a conception which will once again make religion possible. And there is also something of good in Nietzsche's religion of the Superman. Has Ithuriel ever heard of that?

Or he finds Michael weeping over the evils of the world, which he cannot slay, as he once slew a dragon. For Michael is an emotional fellow, as capable of wild sorrow as of wild joy; and to Michael he says that no real reform was ever brought about by mere sentimentality. These evils, he believes, are atavism; they are failures, temporary though regrettable, in the process of adaptation. It is a great mistake

to think of them as dragons which can be slain outright. Michael himself is very young and apt to tilt at windmills. Has he never considered the fact that all remedies are apt to be worse than the diseases, which they attempt to cure? And so on. And in every instance Satan's effort is to draw the particular Archangel apart from his environment, to make him see that there is a contagion in the mere mob spirit of the angels, which leads them, when they are all together, into excesses which they would deplore if only they could think things over quietly by themselves or with him. But always he fails; for even Michael's tears are turned to laughter by his attempts to console him, and this laughter in each case communicates itself to the whole heavenly host. By means of it they become aware of Satan's presence among them, and they crowd round him entreating him with happy tears in their eyes to tell them some more. He is, they say, too good to be true. He always surpasses himself. And they turn what he has said into wonderful parodies. Michael acts him to himself towering above him, acts him with an eloquence of which he himself is quite incapable; and Raphael sings to him a hymn like "Hark! hark, my soul!" only far more so, and with an ineffable quiver in tremolo, which Satan would enjoy if he did

not know that it was not meant seriously ; and Ithuriel touches him with his spear, so that he suddenly feels a new inspiration in himself, and begins to speak with a fervour of common sense he has never felt before, explaining how the uttermost secret of wisdom is to think of everything in terms of something else. And at that the laughter in Heaven rises higher and higher and becomes more and more rhythmical, every celestial voice and instrument entering into it, until he has to flee away for fear lest he should be tempted to enjoy it.

VII

The Wild Virtues

LAW, justice, rights, these are all human notions made necessary by human imperfection; and all of them consent to that imperfection. There is a contract, a bargain, implied in all of them; but Christianity tells us to exact no contract or bargain. If we have a duty towards men, it is not because they do their duty towards us; rather the proper aim of the Christian is to rise above the sense of duty, and to do all things from the motive of love, to rise in fact, into a higher state of nature in which he will not need the artifice of duty to guide him.

A mother makes no bargain with her child; she will do all for it, not expecting any return but because she loves it. And what the mother is in nature to her child, that the Christian wishes by grace to be to all men. That is why the mother and child has been the chief subject of Christian art; for there in the natural world is the promise and pattern of the world of grace. There instinct

tells us what reason should aim at, and gives the lie to the dark and savage belief that human nature is all evil. But all through the ages before Christianity, reason was too proud to follow that natural guidance. The philosophers have given us all their reasons for being good, but they did not recognize that simple image of goodness. To them goodness itself has been a matter of contract, not a gift from nature that we can take if we choose. It is something which men contrive between themselves and attain to by artifice, something disciplined and tame and limited. But in the mother all the time there was wild goodness to be seen and loved; and the philosopher in all his wisdom is not arrayed like one of these. The love of the mother, being instinctive, has often seemed foolishness to the philosopher, though a foolishness useful to the race. But to Christianity it is the proof of the divinity in human nature, in all living creatures even; and there is nothing divine in any wisdom which has not learnt from it. And it is divine for that very reason which makes it seem foolish to the unchristian mind; because it asks nothing in return, because the mother gives it for the joy of giving and takes no thought of the morrow when it shall be returned to her. This is foolishness to us, if we base all our conduct upon our sense of our

own rights, if goodness is to us a sound investment, if we must justify it by results before we practise it; but Christianity tells us to practise it so that we may know what it is, and to look for our reward in practising it, not in having it returned to us. It is more blessed to give than to receive; and the mother is blessed because her joy of giving is not troubled by the expectation of receiving.

Whenever we have this expectation of receiving we are not wholly good, however good our actions may be; and we are stinted of the joy of goodness. For that does not lie in the hope of receiving or in our sense of our goodness, but in the bounty of giving, in which we utterly forget ourselves. Man is a being that finds its purpose in life when it gives; but this fact we do not know by nature nor do we discover it by argument; we discover it only when we give, as the artist discovers the joy of his art when he practises it. But we must give, and not lend, to discover it; and giving means giving without a thought of return, as loving means loving for the sake of what is loved. There is nothing legal in giving, and a gift at law may not be a gift; it is a gift only if self is utterly forgotten in it.

That is why there seems to be an element of unreason in Christianity, that element

which Christians call divine and which others call sentimental. But this is the reverse of sentimentality. The sentimentalist always tests his actions by the emotional pleasure they give him ; his desire is, not to give, but to have the pleasure of giving. Christianity tells us not to give for the pleasure of giving ; it does not even tell us that we shall have a pleasure in giving; it only tells us to give and, if we can, to forget ourselves in giving; for so we shall perform our proper spiritual function in life.

On that point Christianity is dogmatic ; but there is dogma somewhere in every philosophy, and it is well to know exactly where it is. But this dogma makes no attempt to conceal itself behind a pretence of limitless reason ; it tells us plainly where reason ends for it, and asserts that reason will act rightly only on its assumptions. You cannot know what the nature of goodness is, unless you start by seeking for goodness in self-forgetfulness ; and self-forgetfulness is to be found only in loving and giving. Base your goodness on any contract, seek for it through any contract, and you will never find it, never even satisfy yourself that you have found it. You may argue about it for ever, but you will not know it; for you will not be aware of it in yourself or in others, and that

which you present as goodness will not convince others or yourself. You may know some good actions from bad ones when you see them, but the principle which divides them you will not know; the test will be withheld from you, since you will not have found it in yourself.

Christianity, then, makes its assumption about the nature of goodness; it tells us that there is in the mother this simple instinctive goodness, this bounty of giving, which we must recognize as goodness and take for our model in all our conduct. We must be humble enough to do that, and not believe that by the exercise of the pure intelligence we can attain to an idea of goodness beyond the reach of the simple man or woman. All the while goodness may be there in the simple, and we shall best use our intelligence in recognizing it.

But this assumption which Christianity makes about goodness in life is of the same nature as the assumption we all make about goodness in art. We see that some men have a gift in art to which others cannot attain with all their skill and pains. Pope was the cleverest of poets, but he could not write Blake's "Infant Joy"; and for me "Infant Joy" is worth all Pope's verse, because there is in it entire self-forgetfulness, and Pope never quite forgets himself. In that poem Blake is like a mother

with her child, alone with her child and thinking of nothing but that; but Pope is always in the world and thinking of it, speaking to it. We cannot say why we value this lonely music so much, why it is pure music to us and the pointed conscious speech of Pope is not; we only know the music from the speech, and love it more. It is a pure gift, made not to any one set of men or with any expectation of applause, but made, as it were, to the universe: it is an answer, as the song of birds is an answer to the sunrise.

Such an answer Christianity tells us to make to the universe and to all living things in all our conduct and in our whole being. We are to be instruments played upon by life and always giving forth music, and our will should be to give forth this music, not to demand it from life. So when we see those who do give it forth, we know that they are good, as we know that Blake's song is good. They may have no success with the world, but their success is that they do not need it. They give and do not ask; their state is to them so natural that they never expect applause for it, and would be uneasy if they got it. Whatever is good in them seems to them only a gift from life which they give out again naturally, as if by a physical process, not by a legal contract. It is more blessed to give than to

receive, and they are blessed in that they can give.

So we too, if our values are right, shall feel that they are blessed; even though it may seem to us that they are unfairly blessed, like the poet with his gift of music which no learning or pains can imitate. They are right as he is right, but what have they or he done to earn such rightness? Is there not something immoral in a morality which places the highest value on this simple natural rightness, on this almost passive blessedness? Many, Nietzsche among them, have thought that there is; he tells us that Christianity is profoundly, poisonously immoral, a system made by the weak so that they may overcome the strong, by the passive in their envy of the active. To him activity is everything, it is man's business to make his own universe, not to be an instrument of music. It is better to take than to give, to assert your own will than to answer to the will of God. And this belief of his is ultimately a denial of the justice of Christianity, a protest against its valuing of those qualities which he himself did not possess. He knew that qualities he himself admired were fine, just as the qualities of Pope are fine; why then should men value other qualities more, why should there be this genius for goodness, this quiet power which

does not strive or cry, and yet all things are given to it, even the love of men, when they know how and what to love ?

Why indeed ? To that question there is no answer for those who demand justice, who are aware of their own merit and expect a reward for it. But we cannot reconcile ourselves to the universe until we cease to be aware of that or to expect a reward. We must not demand justice if we are to see it anywhere; above all, we must not compare our deserts or rewards with those of others ; for if we do we shall always be partisans of ourselves. To rise above the demand for justice, that, according to Christianity, is the only way to wisdom. And Christ is always telling us not to expect what we suppose to be justice from God. For when we ask for justice from Him, we are comparing ourselves with other men, and what do we know of their inner life, of their infinite past or future, or of our own, to justify any comparison ? Whether there is a God or not, this demand for justice as between ourselves and other men is foolish. We know, whatever our theological beliefs may be, that there is no justice given to us in this life, that what there is we have to make for ourselves. But the justice we make for ourselves cannot affect our values. It cannot make us think the bad artist equal to the good one because

he takes much pains ; nor can it make us think the bad man as good as the good one, although we may believe that he was born bad through no fault of his own. The aim of Christianity therefore is to make us aware of values which are our own, not to impose upon us certain arbitrary values. It tells us what goodness is, but only so that it may clear our minds, so that we may confess that what it calls goodness is indeed goodness, is that which we love. Nietzsche tries to tear us away from our own conception of goodness to another which, he says, will be much better for the human race. He has invented a new kind of goodness, as if such a thing could be invented. He might as well invent some æsthetic theory according to which the bad artists are the good ones, and Tupper the superior of Shakespeare.

Christianity attempted no such feats of transvaluation. It only asked men to become aware of their real values, not to be turned away by egotism, or the theories inspired by egotism, from what they really love. Men need humility, it tells us, to know what they love ; they are always being tempted away from the lilies of the field to Solomon in all his glory, because egotism makes them wish to have the power of Solomon. But they do not love the powerful, and they must be humble themselves before they can distinguish

between their egotistical admiration of power, which means that they desire power for themselves, and their love of what is simply right. What is simply right must be loved for its own sake; we get no worldly profit from loving it. We must see that it is right, as we see that the lilies of the field are beautiful; and Christianity points to it and asks us if it is not right as the lilies are beautiful. In fact it appeals to our good taste in morals, while the philosophers are arguing that there is no taste in morals; that we must acquire them by a purely intellectual process which they will teach us.

The philosophers tell us to think and act always—at least they are apt to think of life only in terms of action and pure thinking. Men are to them purely active beings, whose business is to produce effects on each other and on the universe by action. And this tendency of the philosophers is in all of us. We see ourselves always as actors in life and test ourselves as well as others by what we take to be our success in action.

But Christianity conceives man to be rather a passive than an active being, whose business is to experience rightly. Things happen to him, and what matters is the manner in which he takes them. Far the greater part of our lives is thus passive. We are as it were

sensitive plates; and yet we are plates which can control the version of the universe which they take, making it true or false, beautiful or ugly, trivial or profound. It is not that action is unimportant, but that action itself is controlled by the quality of the version we receive. In fact in action we give out that version again, and action itself is something that happens to us, though, by a common delusion, we think of it as something that we cause to happen.

This delusion is natural since, for the most part, we have to judge ourselves and others by action, because it is by action that they reveal themselves to us. But it remains a delusion and has mischievous results. We always try to exercise our wills in action; and finding that we often act contrary to will—that is to say, that we cannot approve of our own actions—some of us cease to believe in will altogether. The mistake is that they look for the action of the will in the wrong place. They expect it to work too late. They discover that action is always an effect, but not that it is the effect of our own receptive quality, and that we exercise our will in imparting that quality to what we experience.

For instance, if a man is terrified, his terror produces action; he runs away perhaps, and we call him a coward. Yet his running away

is action just as much as if he had withstood what frightened him. Yet it seems to him, when he looks back and is ashamed of it, as if he had been the purely passive agent of terror. He did what he did not wish to do, at least, what he did not wish afterwards to have done, but the essential difference between him and the brave man is in the manner in which they experience what happens to them, and it is this in both cases which controls action.

In judging a coward we are always troubled by the difficulty of predestination and free will. We condemn his cowardice; yet we say he could not help it. And it is true that he cannot help his action; his action has been determined by the manner in which he has experienced, by the quality of his receptivity; but, according to the Christian doctrine, we have control over the quality of our receptivity, and therefore it is this quality that we ought to watch over. But if we think of ourselves as active beings, we neglect this quality for action, and are constantly discouraged, because we find we have so little control over the quality of our actions.

Being by nature passive beings, we ought to exercise our will upon ourselves, not upon the world outside us. To attempt to do the latter is mere wilfulness, it is that "will to power" which Nietzsche glorifies, and the

result of it is that we lose control over the quality of our receptivity, our experiencing power is weakened in the effort to exercise power over others, and we do indeed become violent automata, valuing our actions according to their violence. The most remarkable fact about men of "iron will," like Napoleon, is the decay of their will power as their action grows more and more energetic. They seem to be driven by a force within them to their own ruin. *Quem deus vult perdere dementat prius*, we say; and the meaning of that is, that a man cannot change himself from a passive into an active being. If, in the hunger for power, he tries to do so, he will only lose power over himself, and give out blindly that which he has received blindly.

It was for a very good reason that Napoleon believed in fate. In his desire for power over others, he had lost his power over himself, and his fatalism is common in men of action as they are called, that is to say, in men who would rather have power over others than over themselves. So also the fatalism of Mohammedanism belongs naturally to a religion of power; and it does give strength in action, but a blind strength—which is really weakness.

VIII

What is Art?

EVERY one now is thinking, or talking, about the nature of art and æsthetic experience. There is something both exciting and baffling in the problem, so baffling that we can hardly say even what the problem is; we only know that it is a new one to us, of which no one in the past seems to have been even aware. For, in the past, art was assumed to be a subsidiary activity, and consciously valued always in terms of something else. Even Tolstoy, though he saw that art was important, wrote his book—*What is Art?*—to insist that we ought to value it in terms of other things; his judgments of particular works of art were based on that assumption, and reduced it to an absurdity. But he was, at least, uneasy about the matter; earlier writers, even the best of them, such as Shelley, in his Defence of Poetry, took it for granted that art was to be justified by the moral and intellectual good it had done to mankind. Johnson, who had

cleared his mind of cant on so many subjects, talked unmeaningly on this. Of an epic poem that Dryden wished to write, he said : " That this poem was never written is reasonably to be lamented. It would doubtless have improved our numbers and enlarged our language, and might perhaps have contributed, by pleasing instruction, to rectify our opinions and purify our manners." But nowadays we at least know this, that, if we lament the loss of a poem, it is because we have lost the poem.

Johnson gave these other irrelevant reasons, because something prevented him from thinking clearly on that subject. If he had thought clearly, he would have seen at once that, in fact, poetry is not valued because it improves our numbers or enlarges our language, still less because it rectifies our opinions and purifies our manners. His own experience would have told him that he did not read poetry with these objects, or at least that, if he did, it was no longer poetry to him but something else. In fact men have valued art, ever since there has been any art, for its own sake ; yet always they have cast about for irrelevant reasons, why they should value it ; and, even now, though we have discovered that it is to be valued for its own sake, we are puzzled by that discovery, and still often fail to think of art in terms of itself. There

remains a conflict between our actual experience of art and our thought about that experience, which we can ignore only by a conscious and painful effort; the moment we are off our guard, we begin to think in the old terms. For instance, I read in the Athenæum that "the fundamental connexion between art and morals still remains a mystery"; but, when I consider my own actual experience of art, I find this remark without meaning. For, while I am experiencing a work of art, I am aware of no connexion between that experience and my own conduct or the conduct of anyone. If a work of art is good to me, its goodness is not moral but simply æsthetic, something perceived immediately and valued for its own sake, without relation to any kind of conduct. But great artists like Beethoven have not seen this; he said that Don Giovanni was immoral, though, if he had recalled his actual experience of it, he would have known that in that experience there was nothing conducive to any kind of conduct whatever.

This is what both interests and baffles us in art; for there is something in our minds which expects all experience to have a direct effect upon our conduct. Whatever happens to us is, we assume, a command or a stimulus to do something; we connect it with our future, and judge it by its effect upon that

future. So those who are most laboriously on their guard against valuing art in moral terms, are still apt to praise a work of art because it "tells the truth about life"; but this talk about truth in art is as much an error and a delusion as the talk about morals. People call a work of art true to life, when they mean that it is a work of art; *true* is simply a wrong term of praise they give to it, because, in their thought, they are still forgetting their actual experience of the work and considering its effect upon their future; they think they have learned something from it, and they proceed to praise it for that reason. But if, as may happen, we do learn something from a work of art, that is an accident. It is not the reason why we value it, nor, in fact, are we disappointed if we learn nothing from a work of art. It is only in afterthought that we connect our experience with our future at all.

But, more than that, it is the very essence of æsthetic experience, that we disconnect it from our future. During it we look neither before nor after; only the now exists for us, freed from all that has been or will be. And we recognize a work of art by its power of giving us this freedom. Art is infinitely diverse in content and in medium; the work of art may be, considered in other terms, a

trifle like *Cosi fan tutte*, or a terror like King Lear; in reference to actual experience it may be matter for laughter or tears, or neither; it may be the solution of a practical problem, like architecture, or of a problem almost geometrical like some music and painting; but, behind all these diversities, its essential quality for us is that it frees us from the chain of events which in other experience binds us to our past and future.

Yet, as soon as the experience is over, we are again bound by that chain and think in terms of it. That is why we find it so hard to think rightly about art, and why it at once excites our curiosity and baffles it. After the experience we are not what we were during it; the artist himself, we may guess, is not, after the process of creation, what he was during it; and so even he often tries to value his own work in terms of something else. He does not remember that the practice of art is to him really a different kind of being, an experience in which he escapes from the chain of events and lives in the moment; and that he values it for that and for no other reason.

There is a symptom common to all kinds of art which we call "rhythm," and which is really a symptom of this freedom. For rhythm itself is freed movement. Our ordinary talk is constrained in its movement by practical

necessities, provoked by what has been, and concerned with what is to be done. But poetry is speech concerned only with saying something as well as it can be said, it is speech of the now, without past or future; and its movement, thus freed, is rhythm. So the dance is a freed, purely expressive movement of the body. And music is sound, freed even from meaning; the notes are themselves, without reference to any objects or ideas; and so rhythm in music is more masterful than in any speech. And the effect of rhythm on us is to give our minds the same freedom from past and future and the compulsion of necessity. We know that it would be absurd to ask about rhythm, whether it was true to life, or whether it impelled us to right or wrong conduct. We value it because it frees us from all such considerations, because it communicates a state of mind freed from them; and that value is enough for us, until we begin to think about it.

As for the relation between rhythm and the content which it masters, that is not so bewildering as it seems. You cannot have rhythm without content of some kind; and the richer the content, the greater the victory of the rhythm. The state of being of æsthetic experience is not an abstract state; it uses all the content of other experience for its own

purpose of freedom. If we are to live utterly in the now, that now must be full, not empty; it must convince us of its reality, just as Heaven, if it were to be Heaven, would need to convince us of its reality. The devout have destroyed belief in Heaven by emptying it of content and so killing the desire for it. But, if we would realize Heaven, we must conceive it in terms of art; and, if we would know what art is, we must understand that it gives us a kind of Heaven, a state of being, parallel to our actual experience, but freed from all that prevents us from experiencing it fully, freed from past and future and from questions about true and false and right and wrong. In Heaven there would be no true or false or right or wrong; there would be only the moment made eternal, with all the diversities of the universe mastered and expressed in rhythm.

IX

Art and Pleasure

ONE day, in June 1921, I was looking lazily through the paper in the train; and what I chose to read was an article headed "Carpentier's Big Task." I ought not to have read it, because I am contemptuous of the people who waste time and money and energy upon prize-fights; but I did read it, partly because I wished, being both dull and cross, to irritate myself with this spectacle of human folly, and partly because all the serious news in the paper was calamitous or threatening, and I did not wish to depress myself by reading of evils I could not mend or dangers I could not avert. That, no doubt, is why we all read about frivolities in the newspapers and why the newspapers are so full of them. They are like Grand Guignol plays and give us farce between their horrors because to them the serious is always either horrible or dull.

But as I read, I found that the writer of this article was also enjoying the spectacle of human folly, though, being an artist and

a journalist, he did not say so. Without comment he described the habits of the two boxers and the curiosity of the public about them. One passage in particular *first* amused me and then set me thinking. He contrasted the reticence of Carpentier with the publicity of Dempsey; but one day, he said, some ladies persuaded Carpentier to let them in. "Twenty minutes later he appeared, clad in a white silk robe, a kimono with Japanese monsters embroidered on it. Bowing apologetically to the ladies, he removed this garment and his muscles began to ripple rhythmically. He then gave a display of skipping, which led Dempsey's friends to remark that skipping, even to the ropes, would not win the fight. After his feet had thus fairly twinkled, he spent four minutes vigorously boxing a shadow, then scratched his skin, as though he were descending from the ring, which was considered important, and repeatedly had his face washed. Next he balanced himself, legs up, on the back of his neck and rode imaginary bicycles in the air. Afterwards he conversed, Gus Wilson interpreting."

It was because this passage amused me that it set me thinking, for it raised the whole problem of art with which I was then occupied. I forgot, while I read it, all my contempt for

the people who were excited about Carpentier and Dempsey ; I forgot even my own curiosity about the causes of their excitement ; I was simply interested in the writer's account of the scene. He made me laugh, and while laughing I ceased to judge morally or to speculate intellectually ; as their admirers might put it, I ceased to be a prig.

But that is the effect of art always, whether it be great or little art, whether it make us laugh idly or purge our imaginations with pity and terror. It always for the time supersedes our moral and intellectual faculties, and while we are under its spell we consent to this supersession, as I did. So it is no wonder that men have always been suspicious of art and puzzled by its power over them. Their minds are divided about it ; for while its power of superseding their moral and intellectual faculties seems to them dangerous, they cannot rid themselves of the desire to have them thus superseded, cannot even convince themselves that this desire is wrong or frivolous. Those who would say that I, because I was amused by this article about Carpentier, and forgot my moral judgments and my intellectual curiosity, therefore ceased, at least for the moment, to be a prig, would so be expressing their value for art. They would mean that my purely æsthetic experience of

the article was " good for me " just because it superseded my intellectual and moral faculties. This would be their instinctive judgment though they might not be able to justify it in set terms.

Such an instinctive judgment and value for art has often unconsciously betrayed itself even in those who have consciously feared and hated art. The Puritans, for instance, condemned art—in *this* world—altogether. They hated the theatre, saw in pictures only incentives to idolatry and lust, and tried to tempt men away from good love-poetry to bad hymns. Yet they thought of Heaven as a place where men would continue to sing for ever—that is to say, would be for ever occupied with the art of music. They might call this art " Praising the Lord," but that was only their way of concealing the real and permanent desire of their hearts from themselves ; for like many devout people they would never confess that they did anything because they wished to do it. A life of art was still to them the ideal state of being, and the inconsistency with which they condemned art on earth, while they imagined it to be the solid business of the blessed in Heaven, did but express, unconsciously, the conflict between man's persistent value for art and his persistent suspicion of it.

The Puritans did not profess to be philosophers, indeed they condemned philosophy also as sinful; but in their attitude towards art they were very like the philosophers who, from Plato onwards, have distrusted art while they have valued it, and who have sought, so often vainly, to reconcile their distrust with their value. For just as the Puritans were able to value art, in Heaven, by calling it "Praising the Lord," so the philosophers have sought a justification for the human value of art, not in art itself, but in some further purpose which it might be made to serve. Sometimes we are told that art is the handmaid of religion, with the implication that when it is not, it becomes the handmaid of something less respectable; but always art must be the handmaid of something if it is to be justified at all. Always there is the effort to find it "a good situation" so that it may not go on the streets; and this anxiety no doubt arises because art puts the moral and intellectual faculties in abeyance.

That is why the philosophers for so long said, as if it were a self-evident fact, that the aim of art is to give pleasure. If, when we experience a work of art, we do not exercise our moral and intellectual faculties, it is assumed that we can have no object but pleasure in experiencing it; and further, that

the artist can have no object but our pleasure in producing it. But this assumption, taken for granted in the past, and still unconsciously made by many people who have never thought about the matter, is the source of most of our bewilderment about art. One must get rid of it before one can think clearly about art at all; and even when we have consciously rejected it, we shall find it unconsciously persisting in our minds and still producing confusion of thought, unless we are incessantly on our guard against it.

It is certainly true that while I am experiencing a work of art I have no impulse either to do any good action or to discover any truth. The more thoroughly I experience a story or a play, the more I am absorbed in it, the less do I exercise my moral judgment on the characters; indeed, the moment I begin to exercise such a judgment, to say to myself—This man ought not to do that, I am ceasing to be absorbed in the story. So also if I ask myself—Why does this man do that? I am ceasing to be absorbed in it, I am passing from the experience of the work of art into an intellectual activity of my own; and the writer who provokes me to this question in the midst of my experience of his story is failing with me, whether it be his fault or mine. I may, after I have read *Hamlet* or seen

it acted, fall to asking myself what is the explanation of his conduct; but, if I do, it is no longer a work of art to me; I might ask the same question about a real man; and, if I do ask it about Hamlet, I am treating him as if he were a real man, not a character in a play.

So if any account or description of a real man becomes a work of art for me, he ceases to be a real man and becomes, as it were, a character in a story. While I read the description of Carpentier's behaviour, he was to me no longer Carpentier, an actual boxer training for an actual fight; and I should have been just as much amused by the description if it had occurred in a novel. I was interested in the description of Carpentier, not in Carpentier himself, who, as I read, had no real existence for me. Hence the supersession of moral judgments and intellectual curiosity; for one cannot rationally judge a person who is an imaginary person, or rationally feel any psychological curiosity about him.

Many of the philosophers, like the Puritans, have supposed that we can value this supersession of the moral and intellectual processes only for the pleasure we get from it. It has been to them merely a supersession, a negative thing, which substitutes pleasure for the higher or more useful moral and intellectual pro-

cesses; and they have not thought of the experience of art as positive and good in itself. So they have said that the aim of art is to give pleasure—pleasure being their name for that which is held desirable without being either useful or good in itself. They might say that art was a pleasure more refined than the pleasures of the senses, meaning that it could be enjoyed with less mischief to the soul and body; for to them the artist was a provider of pleasure, and, as such, respectable only if the pleasure was harmless or a means to something better.

For, since they found themselves valuing art and would not admit that they valued it merely for the pleasure which it gave, they were forced to seek for reasons for that value outside art itself. Hence the view, so long held or at least professed, that the proper function of art is, by means of the pleasure which it gives, to recommend other and higher things. The poet, it has been said again and again, is to be respected if he makes agreeable to us moral lessons which otherwise we might find repulsive. This is the powder-in-jam theory, and it is based on the belief that poetry is that kind of art which makes language sensuously pleasant. The poet has the gift, in itself trifling, of using words so that they tickle our sense of hearing, and in-

directly other senses, like delicious food and wine; but he becomes respectable only when he uses it to say things which, in a sermon, would send us to sleep. While we enjoy the pleasure given by his language and images, the moral lesson slips unnoticed, like the powder in the jam. Or sometimes poetry was defended as a means of giving useful information. Sir Philip Sidney, in his *Apology for Poetry*, says that poetry was "the first light-giver to ignorance, and first Nurse whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledges." Orpheus, he says, could draw with his charming sweetness the wild untamed wits to an admiration of knowledge; and the philosophers of Greece durst not for a long time appear to the world but under the masks of poets. In fact, he defended poetry itself as a mask, a pretty disguise of things plainer but more valuable. We may be sure that this was not his real opinion, and we may wonder that he did not see how dangerous the argument was; for the answer to it was obvious. Poetry might have been useful in more primitive times; but in the age of Elizabeth this use was obsolete. Men needed no longer this nurse and could feed on tougher knowledge without the milk of poetry. But Sidney said only what every one said. When a poet could slip unawares

into this absurdity we may be sure that he caught it from other men.

Another poet, Ben Jonson, also fell into it. He said that "the pen is more noble than the pencil, for that can speak to the understanding, the other but to the sense. They both behold pleasure and profit as their common object; but should abstain from all base pleasures lest they should err from their end, and, while they seek to better men's minds, destroy their manners." Jonson was a man of powerful intellect, but here, starting with the notion that the aim of art is to give pleasure, he adds profit so that he may make art respectable, and he sees pleasure and profit as two distinct, and sometimes conflicting, aims. If he had looked into his own mind and asked himself why he wrote poetry, he must have seen that he did so with no aim of giving either pleasure or profit.

But in this passage of Jonson there appears also the notion of a hierarchy of arts. Poetry is more noble than painting because it can speak to the understanding, painting only to the sense; in fact, painting is all jam, while there is powder concealed in the jam, the sensuous part, of poetry; and just because, according to this doctrine, poetry is a mixed product and painting pure, poetry is the greater. In this hierarchy of the arts, an art

is valued according as it is capable of some purpose not artistic. Here perhaps we may find an explanation of the decline of music in England. For no people fell so completely into this heresy as the English. Those who would defend poetry from the attacks of the Puritans were always insisting upon its power of conveying moral lessons, of speaking to the understanding; they could not defend music so; for Puritans, and for all who held the pleasure-heresy about art, music could be justified only when it became the handmaid of religion and was fitted to probably bad hymns. In the reign of Elizabeth, men's instinctive value for both poetry and music was so strong that it could not be perverted by a wrong æsthetic; but gradually that wrong æsthetic did pervert the actual practice of the arts. After the Restoration, writers and the public alike, holding that the aim of art was to give pleasure, and, being sick of sermons, tried to give and to get nothing but pleasure from literature, and pleasure of the most direct and practical kind, namely, sexual. But music suffered from this heresy more even than literature; for, since it can neither imitate or represent anything nor make any reference to facts, it is incapable of giving this kind of pleasure except by faint association. So it came to be regarded more and

more as a trifling game. And this view of it persisted when the reaction came and literature was judged not in terms of pleasure but in terms of moral or intellectual profit. Music is as incapable of that as of giving sexual pleasure. So a false æsthetic destroyed a noble art, which had been practised nobly by the Elizabethans. For they valued art too highly and instinctively to sacrifice it to any æsthetic and, like Sidney, failed to practise what they preached. Milton was a Puritan; but when he wrote poetry he was an artist, and in his "At a Solemn Music" the true Elizabethan value is expressed:

"Blest pair of Syrens, pledges of Heaven's joy,
Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,
Wed your divine sounds, and mix'd power employ,
Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce."

Puritans and Pandars alike might have learned a true æsthetic from that poem.

But when the reaction came, the great poets, such as Shakespeare, were praised more and more for qualities not artistic. Shakespeare was held to excel other poets in moral earnestness, in philosophic profundity, or in precise knowledge; and this kind of praise is still given to him by critics who still in their

hearts believe that the aim of poetry is to give pleasure, and who would justify their enjoyment of it in other terms. Since they cannot reconcile their value for Shakespeare's plays with that belief, they must find other and irrelevant reasons for valuing them. In fact, they do prefer *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to *The Psalm of Life*, and, that they may do so with a good conscience, they persuade themselves that the *Midsummer Night's Dream* is a vehicle of a moral and intellectual profundity which the *Psalm of Life* lacks.

If this view of poetry and all literature and art were obsolete, or even old-fashioned, I might say no more about it. But it persists in the most "advanced" critics. They are advanced not in their æsthetic but only in their morality; and if they laugh at the old-fashioned praise of Shakespeare's moral lessons, it is only because they associate it with an old-fashioned morality. You may scorn to look for moral lessons in a *Midsummer Night's Dream*, but, if you are an advanced person and proud of your advanced morality, you will still be looking for the lessons of that morality in your favourite authors. When Ibsen was first read and acted in this country the fight was not about his art but about his morality. While he was attacked as im-

moral by the old-fashioned, he was praised by the advanced as the great exposer of the shams and delusions of the modern world. But advanced or rebellious morality is still morality; and if you value Ibsen as a rebellious moralist, you are at one in æsthetic error with those who value Longfellow for his orthodox morality. The only question to be asked about Ibsen's plays is, Are they good plays? and it can be answered only through æsthetic experience of them, not through any opinion about his morality.

Again, I have seen in advanced criticism the opinion expressed that the plays of Sophocles are inferior to those of Euripides, because Sophocles accepted the obsolete ethics implied in the stories which he dramatized. It has been said that his Orestes and Electra have no scruples about matricide, whereas the very theme of the Electra of Euripides is the reaction in their minds after they have killed their mother. Now, of course, Euripides has a right to this theme, but not as morals, only as the theme for a drama; and he justifies it, not because it implies a high morality in himself, but only because he makes a good play out of it. But Sophocles also has a right to make his drama out of a more primitive kind of person. The ethics of the characters are, in both plays, only part

of their subject-matter, and we have no right to judge either dramatist by the morals of their characters. The only question to be asked about either, is, Does he out of that material, out of people thinking, feeling, and acting in a certain way, make a good play. If we allow our experience of a play to be hindered by the fact that we do not approve of the morality of the characters, then we are refusing to experience it æsthetically, and have no right to any opinion about it. But, also, if we approve of the play because we approve of the morality of the characters, or because we believe that the dramatist is preaching a certain morality through them, then also we have failed to experience the play æsthetically, and have no right to an opinion about it. In either case we are cut off from æsthetic experience by our own parochial opinions, we are æsthetically slaves to time and place, and lose that freedom of the ages which only full experience of art can give. For the question whether this or that morality is right is one that cannot be argued or determined in terms of art ; to ask it even is to hinder oneself from experiencing a work of art. If a play raises it in your mind, then it is either your fault or the fault of the play ; for, if the play succeeds with you, it creates a world in which no such things happen, and there is an end of it ;

whether or no they ought to happen is irrelevant.

All these irrelevancies of judgment, whether in the old fashioned or in the advanced, spring from the belief that the aim of art is to give pleasure, along with a feeling that such an aim is not enough to justify our value of certain works of art. Our theory being that when any work of art happens to us simply and completely, we value our experience merely for the pleasure that it gives; we are not content to let a work of art happen to us simply and completely. We feel we must get something more from it than this experience, and the very effort to get something more prevents the experience. Hence all our critical perversities, and the "pleasure-heresy" in particular, must be wrong, since it leads to thinking so confused, and since it prevents that very experience of art upon which all true æsthetic must be based.

The pleasure-heresy about art is open to attack from other quarters. It is really only one instance of that general heresy which is called hedonism, and which is not so much a philosophy as a misstatement of fact. For the hedonist maintains that, in fact, we do aim at pleasure in all our activities; and this, by experience, we know to be untrue. But whereas he holds that in some of our activities

we aim at pleasure unconsciously and indirectly, art is, for him, that activity in which we aim at it consciously and directly; and many people agree with him about art who do not agree with him about their other activities. Therefore one can treat the hedonist error about art separately, and ask why it should still be held about art by many who do not hold it about other things.

The reason is, no doubt, because when they think about the matter, they cannot find a reason that satisfies them for their instinctive value for art. The value is there, but why? They see many reasons why they should value moral or intellectual activities. You can, if you will, explain these other values in practical or economic terms. Clearly, if we all behaved immorally or refused to use our brains, we should be much worse off than we are; we might even soon become extinct. But in the practice and experience of the arts there seems to be no such practical value; there are indeed many people who live prosperously enough without any practice or experience of the arts at all; and there are many who think of all art as an ornament or luxury, something added to life, something which a prosperous society can afford, if it chooses, and a poor society must do without. Further, whereas in morals there may be a conflict between duty

and pleasure, and a man may endure torture and even death for a moral principle, the experience and the practice of art is always accompanied by pleasure. Is it not natural therefore that we should suppose pleasure to be the aim of art? We may say that the artist's aim is to give pleasure to others, or to give pleasure to himself. We shall say the former if we think only of his public, the latter if we think only of himself. But in either case we dissociate his activity from duty; and, having done so, we see no alternative aim but pleasure, either for himself or for his public.

All this comes of thinking about art away from the facts of artistic production and æsthetic experience, away indeed from the facts of all experience. For if we look at our experience we shall see that pleasure certainly happens to us in the course of many activities—and that is the ground of the hedonist error—and also that it always happens to us when we experience a work of art fully. But we shall see also that, whereas the pleasure which happens to us is infinitely diverse, pleasure, as soon as we begin to pursue it for its own sake, begins also to lose this diversity and becomes always merely pleasure of the senses. The moment we separate it from the activities in which it happens, and see it as a separate end, it be-

comes something different from the pleasure that happens; our mind concentrating upon pleasure, concentrates also upon the senses and their satisfaction. We may bring to that satisfaction intellectual subtlety, but, as the subtlety has not been gained in the pursuit of pleasure, so it is more and more lost in that pursuit which will make of you a simpler, cruder being, more and more incapable of the complex pleasures that happen in the exercise of other activities. Pleasure, we may say, remains subtle and diverse, so long as it submits to the imagination, so long as it is a product of imagination exercised upon other things; but, when the imagination submits to it, it begins to lose its complexity and diversity.

The reason for this simplification is plain; for those pleasures which happen, and are made subtle and diverse by the intermixture of the activities in which they happen, will not as pleasures satisfy the man who pursues pleasure for its own sake. To him they will be but the preparation for, or incitement to, other pleasures which can give complete satisfaction; and the only pleasure which can satisfy the pursuer of pleasures are those of the senses. From the pleasures of the imagination he presses on to these; his aim is always practical, if he sees a beautiful

actress in a play his desire is not merely to enjoy her beauty as an actress but to cross the footlights, to reach her dressing-room; and his enjoyment of her acting is seen by him merely as a preparation to his enjoyment of herself.

But, further, for him the very pleasures of the senses reduce themselves more and more to the pleasure of two senses which are really one, namely touch and taste; for it is only through these that he can attain to complete satisfaction. Pleasures of sight and hearing, seen merely as pleasures, are only preparatory to pleasures of touch and taste; they arouse desires which they cannot satisfy. The satisfaction of the senses always comes with a physical thrill or spasm or orgasm; something must always actually happen to the flesh itself which cannot happen through the senses of sight and hearing and only faintly through the sense of smell. These other senses may intensify desire, and so heighten its satisfaction when it comes with touch or taste, but they are always merely appetizers; and the very use of them, and the delay which it entails, is but subsidiary to the final thrill or orgasm which must come through touch or taste. For that the pursuer of pleasure for its own sake is always impatient, and his impatience makes it im-

possible for him to experience fully even the pleasures of the subsidiary or preparatory senses. So the arts also, if they are valued as a means of pleasure, must be valued only as appetizers. They appeal only to the senses of sight or hearing, never directly to the senses of touch and taste.[1] But if the arts are experienced only as appetizers they cannot be fully experienced, and the man who pursues pleasure for its own sake, failing to experience the arts fully, will also miss the fullness of that pleasure which they undoubtedly give.

There are, of course, people to whom pictures are merely appetizers; and there are pictures painted for such people. But for them the pleasure of looking at pictures is a *pis aller*; they would rather look at the actual objects that arouse their desire, and then press on to the actual enjoyment of them by touch or taste. The pictures painted for such people, and the mass of would-be art which aims at giving pleasure, is called art,

[1] We talk of the "art" of cookery, and even of the arts of sexual allurement, but that is only by way of metaphor. For whereas in the real arts the art itself is necessary for enjoyment, and painting or music or poetry without art are mere failures, men can enjoy love without the sexual allurement and food without cookery. Fruit, the most delicious food, needs no art of cookery. In fact these so-called arts are employed merely to heighten a pleasure that can be enjoyed without them, or to stimulate a sluggish appetite.

only because of its accidental and parasitic resemblance to real art. Because Correggio painted naked women, appetizing pictures of naked women in the *salons* are supposed to be art; but they are articles of commerce, like the women they represent, and the pleasure they give is of the same kind as the pleasure given by those women except that it cannot satisfy. *Salon* nudes are, as pleasure-givers, inferior to real naked women; whereas Correggio's Antiope is not inferior to, but altogether different from, a real naked woman; the pleasure it gives is different in kind. Again, in music which aims at giving pleasure, since the imitation of actual objects is impossible to music, there is an attempt to imitate, not actual objects, but the kind of physical spasm or orgasm which actual objects, tasted or touched, may produce; in fact to tickle the ear as if it were the palate. Such music is made for the same naïve but corrupt public as the *salon* nudes; and in musical comedy or revue, it is an accompaniment to pretty females, or females trying to be pretty. But the tunes which try to tickle the ear are poor tunes compared with those of Schubert or Mozart; and, what is more, they could never have existed but for the tunes of the great musicians who do not try to tickle the ear. They get their form

from great music, but can do nothing with it because their aim is to give pleasure. You hear them working up to something, and then it never comes; and when they end you are left unsatisfied, as if you had tried to sneeze and failed, or had been told a funny story without a point. All this pleasure-music and pleasure-art effects nothing; because it belongs to a world in which, if it were the only world, there would be no art at all, but only eating, drinking, and fornication. They are parasitic as that world is parasitic, for it also could not exist if it were not supported by the labour of those to whom pleasure is not an end.

X

On Popularity

THERE are two kinds of popularity which I will call intimate and long-distance popularity, and the first is far more real than the second. A man who is intimately popular is liked by those who know him; a man who is popular at long distance has, by some means, succeeded in propagating a favourable notion of himself among those who do not know him. The two kinds of popularity may go together, but often they are separate, and the man who enjoys long-distance popularity is disliked at close quarters.

Intimate popularity is always a proof of some virtue. If a man is liked by those who meet him, he may have many defects and even vices, but still he is liked for a cause, even though it be unknown to those who like him. His society gives pleasure; and it does so because he himself takes pleasure in the society of others, which means that he is disposed to like rather than to dislike them. It

is to him a pleasure to meet those he has never met before; he expects to find them good company, and therefore is good company himself. He is ready to take risks in social intercourse, and will not wait to discover whether you are a bore before he opens out to you. He is in fact sanguine about human nature, and we like those who are sanguine, especially about ourselves, more than those who despond; they fill us with their own vitality and make us sharers in their own enjoyment.

You may say that this easy, instinctive liking is a slight virtue; but it *is* a virtue, for it makes you happy. It is better to like people for no particular reason than to dislike them without reason, better to make them happy than to make them miserable. The man who is intimately popular may be vain, but he is not an egotist—he is more interested in others than in himself; he enjoys, no doubt, the exercise of his social arts, but that is worth enjoying; he is a hedonist, but one who also gives pleasure to others. Very likely he would not go much out of his way to do you a good turn, but he would rather do you a good than a bad one, and his friendship, if not deep, is large; indeed he might plead for himself that he has too many friends to be deeply involved with any of them. We are apt to be unjust to him if we find that he seems to promise

more than he performs; but there is some egotism in our injustice. We have no right to expect that he will think of us when we are absent just because he is so sympathetic when we are present. By his sympathy he does give us something, and for that we should be grateful. Clearly, he cannot feel deeply for all those whose society he enjoys, and why should he feel deeply for us more than the rest? It is not fair to call him a humbug because he forgets us, as soon as our back is turned, for some one else. His enjoyment of our society is quite genuine; he does not make up to us with any ulterior design, for, if he did, we should not enjoy his society; we do enjoy it, and for that we ought to be grateful.

But the way to be intimately popular is, above all, not to judge. The saying, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," is commonly taken for a divine command, but it is also a statement of fact. Nothing makes us dislike a man so much as the knowledge that he is always judging us and all men, that his instinctive reaction is judgment. A man who has the habit of judging others may be respected, as we say, but he is also disliked; and, while the respect is forced the dislike is hearty. If we can, we retaliate upon him by judging him with all the severity at our command.

We seek eagerly for his weakness, and when we have found it insist upon it, as if it were a valuable scientific discovery, for it is indeed a discovery that liberates us from our unwilling admiration of him. When it comes to judging, we feel two can play at that game. So it happens that a man who has the habit of judging, and who has overawed the world by his habit, as if he sat always in wig and robes in the seat of judgment, is suddenly and by universal consent dethroned. This has happened in literature to Carlyle. He was always judging every one, and he overawed the world while alive. But now he is judged more severely than he deserves both as a writer and as a man, while Lamb of whom he spoke with bitter contempt is praised, more perhaps than he deserves, because he never seems to judge anyone, but rather enjoys the society of mankind. We are pleased to find that whereas Carlyle judged men by a heroic standard, Lamb in his way was a hero. Perhaps it was because Aristides had the habit of judging, that the unknown Athenian grew weary of hearing him called the just. What we desire from each other is not justice —for who knows what that is ?—but liking; and we give liking rather than justice to those who enjoy our society too well to judge us. We may criticize them, but our criticism is

only skin deep; we do not wish to discover anything against them because we know they do not wish to discover anything against us. In their society we get a holiday from judgment altogether, and that is one reason why we enjoy it. They may not be Christians, but at least they do not feel or think or act on any perverse and anti-Christian principle. They may not have attained to Charity in the high Pauline sense, but at least they have attained to good nature by instinct.

Many humble people are popular for these reasons; but if a man can keep this good nature, this freedom from judgment, this enjoyment of other people's society, when he has achieved eminence, then he is popular indeed. For, while most of us are instinctively and meanly on our guard against the advances of the humble, we are all flattered by the advances of the eminent; if they seem to have taken a fancy to us, we take a fancy to them. They win popularity easily, and that is a dangerous temptation to them. For a man may have a natural spontaneous virtue, and then become aware of it and exploit it. The successful are often afraid of envy, and have an uneasy sense that the world may suddenly combine to pull them down. There is to them something incalculable in the common opinion that gives them their reputa-

tion, and they fear that it may suddenly veer like the wind. So they try to ensure themselves against such a change by being agreeable to every one; they will make friends wherever they go, so that they may not be overcome by unknown enemies. And they do naturally enjoy the exercise of their social power, which is, of course, enormously increased by their eminence. But the mischief of this is not so much that they get a habit of insincerity, as that they waste their energy in making themselves agreeable and lose the power of saying no. A man in any walk of life, whether he be lawyer or artist or statesman or man of science, when he has achieved excellence can keep it only by hard work. If he spends half his time in making himself agreeable, he will be more concerned with his reputation than with his work, and his work will deteriorate; and so finally will his reputation. Further, if he gets the habit of exploiting his pleasant manners, they will become mechanical and cease even to be agreeable, and he will lose even the popularity for which he has made so many sacrifices. For to succeed one must be an artist even in social intercourse, one must really enjoy it; and the polite formulæ of the eminent are too obvious to give enjoyment.

Still, intimate popularity is worth having, if

only for its own sake; but long-distance popularity is not worth having for its own sake; it is always a means to an end, like propaganda; it is in fact a kind of personal propaganda and no less dangerous than other kinds.

One may see the difference between the two kinds of popularity more clearly in the case of a writer. There are great writers who gain and who keep an intimate popularity, who are read and enjoyed, it may seem beyond their merits, because in their works they express a natural liking for mankind, because they themselves enjoy rather than judge. Among these are Dickens and the elder Dumas and Shakespeare himself. All of these would rather enjoy mankind than judge them. Even their dislikes are hearty and spontaneous; and the characters they dislike are those who themselves dislike others. There may be reactions against such writers; but through the fiercest reaction they are still read and enjoyed, for they make their readers happy. The elder Dumas, for instance, is at present little thought of in France, but he is still, I believe, read far more than Flaubert, who is always expressing judgments and dislikes, and is as full of unconscious malice as Dumas of unconscious enjoyment.

These writers win an intimate popularity

because of a real virtue, and their sins which are often many are forgiven them, because they have loved much. The sins of Dickens are enormous, yet, as I read him, I find myself averting my eyes from them as Shem and Japhet would not look at Noah drunk; and that is because I get so much delight from reading him, to read him makes me happy. I feel that he would like even me, whereas a writer like Flaubert seems to address himself to me, and all other readers, without contempt only because he has never met us; behind all his books there is an inexorable and malicious judgment passed by one who after all had no more right to be always judging than anyone else. But my liking of Dickens and such writers, even if too partial, does come of a real and close acquaintance. There are other writers who obtain a long-distance popularity, not because of any real merit, but because by some means or other they contrive to spread an idea of themselves and their genius which is not true at all; and this is the secret of long-distance popularity, whether enjoyed by a politician, a writer, a priest, or any kind of public character. Always they have, sometimes consciously, usually unconsciously, spread a notion of themselves among a public too ignorant and busy to exercise any right

judgment yet eager to find a hero. For mankind desires a hero to worship; it makes life more exciting to believe that somewhere there is a wonderful man actually living, one who knows all the secrets of the human heart, or can save society, or can voice all the inarticulate yearnings and ideals of the people, and if for a penny or so you can every week buy a newspaper in which this hero tells the world what ought to be done, then you get immense comfort from that newspaper, even if it contradicts itself once a fortnight, and for the most part says nothing intelligible. Once the notion is spread that it is written by a man who knows, that notion persists if he can go on talking nonsense with the air of one who knows, and of one who is impelled to speak out by an urgent love of truth and justice. For it is a curious fact about this long-distance popularity that, after it is once established, it is not destroyed by closer contact. If a preacher or speaker gets a name for eloquence and inspiration, he too may talk nonsense for ever, provided he does it with an air of conviction. The crowds, who assemble to listen to him, bring with them their idea of him which even he cannot destroy. His very vagueness helps him, for they can read into it what they will, and all go away believing that he said what they expected

him to say. There are at the present time several of such heroes, all of whom won the war; though what they did to win it neither they nor anyone else can tell. It may be indeed, that if they had been allowed to wage the war in their own way, they would have ended it soon without defeat; but it is more probable that they had no way of their own ever present to their minds; their business was to shout directions though a megaphone, but directions happily so vague that no one could obey them even if he would. Not one of these was put to the test like their forerunner Cleon, whom the Athenians suddenly made a commander-in-chief, and who was luckily killed in battle before he could do much harm.

There is a kind of clown called a Marcelline who makes you laugh by pretending to share the work others are doing. When they are rolling up a carpet, he walks behind and imitates their movements in a bland and encouraging manner. Long-distance popularity is achieved in politics and journalism by the same means, except that in these cases the Marcelline is not laughed at but actually deceives others and himself. They, and he, think he is winning the war and what not, by his bland and encouraging, or fierce and obstructive notions; and when the thing is done, he turns round and bows and gets the

applause, while those who have really done it are mopping their brows behind the scenes. But it would be an error to think that this kind of Marcelline is without talent. He needs great energy, but it is spent not in doing anything worth doing, but in spreading a heroic idea of himself. He is in fact like a tradesman who uses great business ability in puffing a worthless patent medicine. What you pay for is the advertisement, and a country which gives power to Marcellines will certainly pay for their advertisements and pay very heavily.

In fact one of the chief problems of any large community like our own, is to free itself from the spell of long-distance popularity, to find some means of discouraging the arts by which it is won. For it is certain that a man who achieves long-distance popularity will not have much time or energy for doing anything else. In that also he is like the tradesman who spends all his money on advertisement, and has none over to spend upon a good article. And the temptation to any unscrupulous man of talent and energy to aim at long-distance popularity is now enormous, if that popularity seems to him worth having. The newspapers are instruments ready to his hand; they seldom even try to have any judgment; if once a man can get himself talked about they will continue to talk about

him; he becomes news as if he were the co-respondent in an everlasting divorce case. Millions of people hear of him who never hear of those who do the real work of the world, and just because he is heard of, he has power. What he says is reported, what he writes is read. If he stands for Parliament, people vote for him; and all the while he is incapable of any excellence, because all his energy goes in self-propaganda. It is so even with many popular writers. They would never write so badly if it were not that most of their energy goes in advertisement; but since they are well advertised, the public finds in their books virtues that are not there; just as it finds in patent medicines healing properties that are not there. So we are misled every way, because we are a community too large to know our public men except by report, and because we have got the habit of judging even books, not by what we find in them, but by the common report of them.

The only remedy seems to be in a psychology that does not yet exist. We must learn the symptoms of self-propaganda, and the symptoms with which it affects us. The man who aims at long-distance popularity behaves in a certain way, of which some of us are already dimly aware; but at present neither the public, nor he himself, know that he is a

criminal of a very dangerous kind. What is needed is a science of the mind, much more precise than any which yet exists, to put us on our guard against him; for until we are on our guard we shall remain at the mercy of every kind of imposture, which is the more dangerous because it is usually half unconscious.

XI

What is the Primitive?

THE word "primitive" is used in two different senses and often in both by the same writer, to the confusion of his thought. In this essay I shall use it only in one sense, which seems to me a useful one; and I shall begin by distinguishing it from the other sense, which seems to me mischievous.

In its mischievous sense the word primitive is applied to those instincts and appetites which are better called primary, the instincts which are common to all men and indeed to all animals, and from which we could not free ourselves without exterminating both ourselves and the human race. It is misleading to call these primitive because the word implies that they survive in us as a heritage from the past, and are not as much a necessary part of our minds as of the minds of savages; whereas, in fact, though we share them with savages, they are a necessary part of our minds; and our problem is not to get rid of them, which is impossible, but to control and use them for

our conscious purposes. They are part of the content of every mind and body, part of the subject-matter of all science and art and morals. To ignore them is to shirk the very problem of life; and when we call them primitive we are beginning to ignore them, to be ashamed of them with a false shame.

Further, we are apt, when we call them primitive, to assume that the savage yields to them without misgiving and restraint; and some people, in reaction from the prevailing false shame about the primitive, are inclined to glorify this supposed savage abandonment to the primary instincts. They use the word primitive in a new sense as meaning strong, free, frank, and generally desirable. That is part of the old legend of the "noble savage." But savages, in fact, do not abandon themselves to the primary instincts any more than we do; they are even more afraid of them than we are. Like us the savage is aware of a frequent conflict between the primary instincts and the good of the community. To him, as to us, these instincts are dangerous because they are individual; and he sacrifices the individual to the community far more than we do. In fact, he is far more the "slave of convention" than we are. His taboos may be beyond our under-

standing, but they are always restraints; and when, as often happens, he loses all control of himself, it is either because his system of control is a bad one, or because, like us, he justifies loss of control in certain conditions and with certain conventions. That, no doubt, is his method of escape from the tyranny of his restraints; for where restraints are stupid there is always a strong unconscious rebellion against them which finds a vent, not in conscious freedom, but in a conventional indulgence in licence. That is so with us as with the savage; and when we thus license ourselves to indulge in primary instincts, we are indeed primitive in the true and useful sense of the word. In this sense primitive does not mean primary; still less does it mean individual; it is not applied to the sexual instinct, or to the instinct of self-preservation, or to the desire for food when hungry, all of which are necessary parts of every individual human being and express themselves in individual action. Rather it means something social and unnecessary, a survival, always unconscious, from past social habit and tyranny; a kind of restraint which being stupid and belated does provoke rebellion, and a kind of licence which itself is primitive because conventional. Thus the word primitive as applied to sex does not

mean the sexual instinct, but rather a manner of dealing with the sexual instinct which we ought to have outgrown; it means not desire but taboo, which produces prurience rather than continence, not an instant yielding to desire but a false conception of law. And where there is this false notion of law there is always an incontinence as conventional as primitive continence. The primitive rake of our time will seduce one woman and not another, always according to rule; for since his rules are stupid and not calculated to induce any real continence, he rebels against them unconsciously with a conventional primitive licence. But always, in obedience and in rebellion, he behaves socially and not individually. The true primitive is always social and a part of past social effort, which may once have been valuable but is now mere momentum.

And always it is unconscious; indeed, to be aware of it is to repudiate it, and the great cure for the primitive is awareness. But there also it differs from the primary instincts. They are not unconscious — though many psychologists seem to think they are. When I am hungry, I know that I am hungry; when I am afraid for my life, I know I am afraid; when I feel sexual desire, I am aware of that desire. It is indeed the very nature of these

primary instincts to force themselves upon the consciousness so that they may be satisfied; and further, we cannot be cured of them by becoming aware of them. If I am very hungry my hunger is not removed when I tell myself that I am hungry; nor by doing so am I induced to repudiate my hunger. It may be, of course, that the instant I become aware of sexual desire I am induced to control it by my awareness; but that awareness, that control, will not destroy the sexual instinct. That remains because it is an essential part of me and every man, an essential part of my problem of life and a part of which I am always aware.

But the true primitive thrives and persists only because I am unaware of it, and by awareness it is destroyed. Thus, while I am not unaware of my sexual instinct, I may be unaware of habits of mind produced by the conflict between that instinct and primitive social restraints upon it, a conflict which exists because those restraints are stupid and produce rebellion against themselves. If I am aware of that conflict and of the nature of the restraints which produce it, I become aware also of my habits of mind; and by awareness I free myself from them, not instantly perhaps, but gradually and by the perfection of the process of awareness. For

there is something in me that resents the tyranny of the primitive as soon as I am aware of it, something which calls it stupid and is ashamed of consenting to that stupidity. Every man, past his false shames, has a true shame when he is convicted or convicts himself of doing a thing because other people do it. That motive for action is the primitive motive and can be destroyed by awareness of it; whereas the primary instincts cannot so be destroyed, for we are not hungry because others are hungry, nor do we feel sexual desire because others feel it. These are necessary appetites, to be restrained, if need be, but not unnecessary social restraints or survivals to be destroyed. Another common error about the primitive, which comes also of confusing it with the primary, is the notion that we inherit it as we inherit the primary instincts. The primary instincts are born in us, but the primitive is not, any more than the bacilli of disease are born in us. We inherit a susceptibility to the primitive as we may inherit a susceptibility to diseases produced by bacilli; but this susceptibility varies in different individuals. And we are born into a society infested by the primitive as we are born into a world infested by certain bacilli. So we may succumb from the first to the primitive, and be more and more subdued to

it all our lives. But still it is not a necessary part of the content of our minds, like our primary instincts ; and we can be cured of it —as we cannot and should not wish to be cured of our primary instincts—but only by awareness of its true nature. The disease of the true primitive consists of unawareness ; indeed, when we suffer from that disease we believe that it is a necessary part of our minds like the primary instincts ; we believe that it is not a bacillus but a phagocyte ; we consent to it and think that its disease is health. But the way to health is to recognize the disease as disease, and as acquired not inherited.

There are, of course, conditions which weaken our resistance to the primitive, as to bacilli, common states of mind in which the primitive for one reason or another seems desirable, and in which we are unaware of its workings. One of these, as we know now only too well, is a state of war ; others are pestilence, famine, and, less universally and violently, industrial depression and commercial panic. In such cases each individual is by fear made more irrational, less aware of his own mental processes ; and through the mental debility of many the whole mental atmosphere becomes insanitary—full, as it were, of floating absurdities, which men catch from each other.

Then they behave like savages, think, feel,

and act like savages, and it is often said that their behaviour is atavistic; but this word is dangerous, for it implies, or seems to imply, the actual inheritance of the actual feelings, thoughts, and conduct, or even of actual conventions or taboos, as if they were primary instincts and necessary like primary instincts. Hence arises a further and very mischievous notion that the primitive even has its uses, its biological value, that it is natural and called out in us by certain conditions so that we may be able to adapt ourselves to those conditions. In war, for instance, it is supposed that we ought to feel, think, and act in a primitive manner; that a national or hard instinct of self-preservation rightly impels us to believe lies, to hate our enemies, and to be ruthless like red Indians. There is talk of an iron will to conquer; there is propaganda addressed always to the primitive; there is even a perverted pleasure in foregoing the life of reason for the life, not of instinct, but of blood feuds and omens and all kinds of mirthless foolery. It is mental laziness that makes us take this perverted pleasure in the workings of the unconscious, and then we justify our pleasure by finding some dark original virtue in this unconscious, as if it came to our help mysteriously out of the past in the hour of need, as if it were the genius of the nation

prompting us to make fools of ourselves so that we may win once again.

Hence arises a notion still more mischievous that there are two kinds of good—the good that is in accordance with reason and at which we consciously aim, and another good born in us and "in harmony with nature." And since this second good is often if not always in conflict with the good according to reason and our conscious values, there arises a belief in the malignity of nature, in her hostility to our reason and our values. Hence either profound discouragement, a dislike both of nature and of mankind as being the slaves of nature, or else a subservience to this supposed nature that would not have us be reasoning beings. This subservience is primitive indeed, but it persists, and even disguises itself in philosophic and scientific jargon. Now, as always in the past, there are those who prefer the imagined purposes of nature to their own values, who exalt the primitive "will to live," or "will to power," or what not, above their own consciences. Such people believe, for instance, that, when a whole nation is possessed by the will for war, there must be something glorious in that will and all its ferocious and silly expressions, merely because it is primitive and violent, that it is something to which the individual conscience and

reason ought to submit, in belief as well as in action.

This is, indeed, a primitive state of mind, though it may express itself in parasitic scientific jargon. It is the state of mind which made mothers sacrifice their children to Moloch, believing that the supposed will of Moloch was good and their own rebellious human will evil. In the past it expressed itself in the jargon of the priest, now more often it expresses itself in the jargon of science ; but, though the jargon may change, the thing itself remains the same, finding fresh unconscious disguises calling itself " hereditary " where once it called itself " sacred," adapting itself, as all low things can, to all conditions, the parasite of civilization as of barbarism. But that it is not hereditary in the full inevitable sense we can prove, because to be aware of it is to be armed with resistance against it. There is that in the human mind which repudiates it as soon as it is recognized ; and civilization means the increasing awareness and repudiation of it, through the application of conscious criticism to belated conventions, and the assertion of conscious values against them.

But in the past this awareness has been precarious, unorganized, and often suddenly lost, it has not even been universally valued

as the great deliverer, because of our lack of psychology. Even the great men who have fought against the primitive, within and without themselves, have not clearly conceived the nature of the enemy against which they were fighting; they have seen and hated the symptoms of the primitive but not the primitive itself; they have, as it were, not discovered the bacillus, and so have employed merely empirical remedies against the disease. They have used anger and satire, the divine anger and the divine laughter of art—very great things, but precarious, dependent on the inspiration of individuals, and always liable to be perverted and misunderstood by that very primitive which they attack. Christianity itself, the most daring rebellion against the primitive ever yet attempted, has remained on the emotional plain, the plain of art, and has never become scientific. The secret of the Founder remained His secret; to His followers He communicated His passion but not His understanding, and that passion was soon itself infected with the primitive from the very air they breathed. There was a momentary stimulation of the phagocytes, so to speak, of the soul, a momentary assertion of the divine reason as the master of feeling, thought, and conduct; but the bacilli remained in the air, unscotched, undetected

even. Not yet was there even a notion of the sanitation of the mind, and as soon as the stimulus weakened with time the bacilli swarmed in again and infected Christianity itself with their old disease. And so it has been with prophet after prophet, especially with those who have set themselves some practical task. Men like Ignatius Loyola, Luther, Wesley, because they had to work socially, have made use of primitive social habits of mind; they have consented to the primitive within and without them, never seeing that that very consent made nonsense of the task they had set themselves to do.

But now we are becoming slowly and still very imperfectly aware of the nature and evil of the primitive, we have the notion at least of a sanitation of the mind; we begin to identify the enemy from the study of ourselves and not merely of savages. Indeed we see that the savage can act as a drunken helot to ourselves, that the primitive, so grossly manifested in him, is the same primitive which works more subtly in us. He is to us what madmen are to the sane, not made utterly different by their madness but with the common elements of insanity specialized and developed. Indeed the primitive is itself a kind of insanity for which men are not shut up in asylums because it is not recognized

being shared by all. The task of humanity is to escape from madness as from sin; and the first step is conviction of madness as of sin. For if I know I am mad, I am not mad; that is the difference between the lunatic and the sane person. The latter, being aware of his madness, can refuse his consent to it and so isolate it in his mind. And so, when we are aware of the primitive in us, we can refuse our consent to it, we can isolate it and decline to think, feel, and act in terms of it. We can be on the watch against this most plausible insanity and all the delights which it offers to the lazy and fearful mind; and the more we are on the watch against it, the less plausible will it seem. We know well enough that the man does not free himself from sin who sees sin only in others and not in himself; and so we cannot free ourselves from the primitive if we see it only in others and not in ourselves. For just as self-righteous reaction against sin in others is sinful, so mere blind reaction against the primitive in others is itself primitive. The primitive, like sin, is always at work within us, because it is always at work without us, but, like sin, we can repudiate it with the whole power of the self. There is in every man a self which desires to be pure from alien and hostile elements and which consents to them only so long as it is not aware of them.

So the task of this self is to be aware of them, of the lies which swarm into it from outside, and which, if welcomed, become lies of the self, of the soul. But it can be aware of them only by watching the lies which it tells to itself, not those which others tells to themselves. The primitive in me, because I have accepted it and made it part of myself, is not the same as the primitive in others; it has my character and a peculiar plausibility for my peculiar weaknesses. If, for instance, I am an "advanced" person very much aware of the workings of the primitive in the mass of men, then the primitive in me takes the form of an advanced bigotry; I repeat to myself false formulæ which I believe, because they are contrary to the formulæ of the mass of men, and I am no nearer to the truth than they are, because I am no more aware than they of the workings of the primitive in my own mind. We wonder often at the harm that has been done by righteous fanatics, both to mankind and to their own cause. But the reason is that they react with primitive blindness against the primitive in other men. Two wrongs do not make a right, and two opposed primitives do not make the life of reason. That consists in being aware of the primitive in yourself, so that you may make other men aware of it in themselves, both by living the

life of reason and by explaining from your own experience of yourself how the primitive works in all men.

We are, as I have said, only at the very beginning of such knowledge; but we do know that it is to be acquired, and we know something of the process by which it may be acquired. We have identified the enemy; and it remains to study him, in his attacks upon ourselves.

But first I would ask the reader to remember the two main points about the primitive. It is social not individual in its nature, the result of past social effort, which may once have had a useful purpose but is now obsolete; it only succeeds with us because we are unaware of it. We yield to it because we do not know what it is, because we think it a part of ourselves, when really it is an infection from the atmosphere. And the notion that it is inherited is but a scientific way of saying that it is part of ourselves. So when suddenly we escape from some habit of mind, some set of beliefs, some way of feeling, which seemed to be part of ourselves but which we repudiate eagerly as soon as we escape from it, then we may be sure that it was an example of the primitive, and that the self is rejoicing in its escape from an external tyranny.

XII

Loose Emotion

HUMAN beings are not what might be expected from any theory that has been made about them, whether religious or biological. That is the reason why psychology needs to be an independent science, to forget theories, religious and biological, and then to consider the facts of human nature, so that it may make discoveries that will change religious and even biological belief.

Now one unexpected fact about human nature that we may discover by a little observation of ourselves and of others is that we have a great fund of emotion, which exists before it is provoked by any particular events, and which feels about for events to justify it. Our life is not entirely a life of responses to external stimuli; but rather a life determined to respond and seeking stimuli that will justify the response. We are more like artists than machines, for the artist wishes to produce works of art and seeks for themes; he

is not forced by what happens to him to produce works of art. His problem is always to find the theme that will justify his emotions, not to find events that will provoke emotions in him. And in our whole lives we are like artists in that, creatures with an immense fund of emotion always seeking a cause for it. So just as inferior artists are satisfied with pretexts for emotion, pretexts that do not really fit the emotion they wish to express, which do not make the emotion their individual emotion, but rather leave it undifferentiated with an accidental disguise rather than expression; so most human beings for a great part of their lives are satisfied, or try to be, with pretexts, at which they clutch without discrimination, and which are to them vents for expression, just as any theme is to the inferior artist. We are constantly aware of what we call emotional insincerity in others if not in ourselves. The phrase misleads if it implies that the emotion itself is feigned. The emotion is there as part of our undifferentiated fund, and it is insincere only in that it has found the wrong pretext or occasion for its vent. We are not really moved by the pretext, we seize upon it as an excuse for the venting of the mass of emotion that is in us. If you doubt that, take the case of laughter. Laughter is only an

expression of a certain kind of emotion, one way of expressing emotion, a way easy, not exhausting, a deprecating way which itself says that the emotion is not important, that the laughter is not important; it is a way of preventing the emotion from mastering the whole self, the very sound means that part of the self is withheld and contemplates not only the universe but itself with detachment.

Hence laughter has much practical value as a vent to emotion, and is also an expression of it. In laughter, human beings can obtain a satisfaction not complete but soothing to their emotional being. But it is common knowledge that human beings commonly do not laugh because they are forced to laugh by events; rather they seek any pretext for laughter; and the poorer the pretext often the more they will go on laughing, because they hope by laughing to convince themselves that the pretext is a good one. They hope that the mere venting of the laugh will make them believe that the pretext is funny. That is so particularly with the young, who will laugh at anything, in company, and hope by laughing to enjoy the theme of their laughter. That is so because they have no training in the art of finding the right theme for their emotion; the emotion is there already, vast, exorbitant, demanding a

vent; and because it seeks the unexhausting vent of laughter with its detachment, it will seize any pretext for that vent. It is a great part of culture to discriminate between good and bad reasons for laughter as of all emotion; instinctively we feel that the man or woman who laughs at anything is undisciplined, that his fund of emotion is dangerous, because it is loose and unattached. When the young fall into fits of giggles we tell them they are silly; we recognize that emotion thus indiscriminate in its pretexts is hysterical. The very word means to us an exorbitant fund of emotion that will seize on any pretext. So the delight of a really amusing story, action, event, is the delight in finding a cause for laughter that really satisfies our reason, so that we can consent utterly to the emotional relief which it allows. We explode as it were in laughter, and yet the explosion is justified. And we are enormously grateful to a humorist who will tell us a story to which we can abandon ourselves, who will give us a theme that does fit our emotion, does give it not only cause but also reason, and so clothes it with a form and differentiates it.

So it is with all art. Our delight in a tune by Mozart is of the same nature as our delight in a good joke. It provides a good reason for emotion, but in this case for an emotion to

which the whole self submits without any detachment. So the great artists who satisfy us that we can utterly abandon ourselves to their themes for emotion are to us divine; and when we are disciplined so that we recognize the reason and justice in their incitements, we have an immense gratitude to them also for so satisfying our emotional being.

But this satisfaction in art or in life is rare; and meanwhile the fund of emotion remains always seeking a pretext, and constantly finding pretexts that are inadequate. In fact the "wish-world" is a world of inadequate pretexts accepted. We do not often attain to such a relation with external things that we can find in them a just theme for our emotions. What we seek always is theme not cause, for the emotion is there already seeking only themes, and the emotion cannot be got rid of, it can only be expressed or suppressed. But when we fail to attain to this relation with the external world of men and things, when we cannot find outside just themes for our emotion, then either we suppress it and it works, while so suppressed, unconsciously to our mischief; or else we find pretexts really within ourselves, forcing upon people and things interpretations which are false but do suffice as a pretext for our emotions.

Religion exists because of this fund of

emotion ; it is itself the effort to find themes for this emotion ; and always our religion is becoming absurd, disgusting others if not ourselves, because we find the wrong theme or are mistaken about the emotional values of that which we experience, or rather fail to experience. Men make a religion out of anything—country, school, college, army, business. They persuade themselves that some pretext for emotion is justified ; they surrender themselves utterly to it and to false expressions in themselves or in others, just as the bad artist surrenders himself, because they are not trained to seek and never be satisfied except with the right theme—the theme which really differentiates and specifies the emotion. So they go more or less completely into a wish-world of pretexts ; they affirm to themselves that this or that set of pretexts satisfies them utterly, does differentiate and specify their emotion, does give it form and content. And in this wish-world their emotional life is lived, yet never satisfied, because emotion can never be really satisfied, can never bring happiness or delight until the right theme is found. Most of us spend our lives unconsciously seeking this happiness, this full satisfaction, this specified differentiated emotion with complete form and content, and never finding it, because we

do tell ourselves always that this or that pretext is the real theme.

Now, what is true of illusions like the "Russian myth," is true also of pretexts for emotion; we can believe in them far more easily if they are shared, since the very sharing withdraws the pretext to some extent from criticism. So the delight of human beings in a shared emotion, and their far greater susceptibility to emotion when shared, is not merely a matter of the herd instinct. An audience which laughs altogether at a pointless joke, which weeps at something not pathetic or absurd, has made as a pretext for emotion a wish-world, in which it can believe because the belief is shared, and so protected from criticism. When I see anyone laugh, I am inclined to laugh too, not because I am a herd animal, but because, to begin with, I wish to laugh, and because the fact that he laughs induces me to believe, by a process not altogether irrational, that he has good reason for laughing. The contagion is not one of the herd, it is merely the removal of the inhibition of reason, a removal which always I desire. It gives me hope; and an audience all laughing at a pointless joke is, by the common laughter, really made sanguine, that there is a point in the joke, that its laughter has a reason and is a differentiated emotion with a specific

form and content. The enjoyment in this case is not enjoyment of the joke but enjoyment of the feeling of hope which is so easily confused with enjoyment of the joke itself. And this is true of all emotions whatever which collectively seize upon a pretext for their vent. The common belief that A is a great artist, the expectation raised by that belief is itself pleasant, and we confuse this pleasure with the satisfaction which the artist fails to give. Thousands of readers open the novels of B with this expectation, and they transfer the pleasure of expectation to the contents of the book itself. They close it believing they are satisfied with the book, when they have got only a delight never consummated from the expectation. Hence, too, the readiness with which their allegiance, thus based upon mere hope, can be transferred from one bad artist to another. It has never really been attached to the work of the artist or firmly associated with that; it has always been expectation which can easily be transferred to another bad artist when the expectation of others also is transferred, and by that means criticism is prevented. Fashion in all things is fickle because its basis is the hope of emotional satisfaction, and this hope in the multitudes, who always confuse the hope with the fact, can be very easily transferred from one object

to another. The art of the bad popular artist is to arouse this hope, not to satisfy it; to exhibit in himself all the symptoms of satisfied emotion without the reality, the contortions of a sibyl without her inspiration; and this he usually does unconsciously, because he himself is always deceived by emotional pretexts, because his own critical faculty has never been trained, and he has by a long career of emotional debauchery accustomed himself to laugh or weep with abandonment at the wrong things.

But in this respect also life is only like art. We are also misled by charlatans in politics and religion no less than in art, by charlatans who believe in their own emotional pretexts. They help us by their own indiscrimination to attach our religion to the wrong themes. They can make us glut our emotions by hating the enemy of the moment or exalting the British Empire, because they themselves glut their emotion so. Undisciplined themselves, they persuade us that we have reason when we share their lack of discipline, when we satisfy our emotional desires by hating instead of loving, by envy instead of admiration, by fear instead of trust. And there is of course an immense material temptation to the demagogue to believe in his own pretexts for emotion, and to encourage the emotions that

centre round them, because we give immense rewards to anyone who can, whether in life or in art, persuade us that we have found the right themes for emotion, that we are feeling not only strongly but reasonably. And in this matter war itself is the biggest demagogue of all; it affords us incessant pretexts for emotion that seem utterly reasonable. It was indeed a great sin in the Germans in the Great War that they did give us so many pretexts which seemed reasons for hating them, that they themselves persuaded us to believe about them what our demagogues would have us believe. Millions during the war got the habit of glutting their emotions on the wrong pretexts, and did fatally associate emotion with those pretexts; and they were able to do this because the pretext did appeal to the whole nation and so was protected from criticism. The wish-world of gratified emotion was strong in its illusion because it was common. We enjoyed it; in spite of all the horrors of the war, we lived in it. The illusion gripped us the more because there were few to tell us that our pretexts for emotion were mere pretexts, and those few being themselves so often subject to the collective pretexts of no less intensity but felt by a smaller group, frequently expressed their rebellion against our own wish-world in a

malicious and irrational way. Their emotions also had an irrational pretext and so could not convince us, but by its unreason only confirmed us in our own.

It is the wish-world always of justified emotion that allures us, not the herd, as we can see by putting a plain question to ourselves: Do we really wish to do what others do, to feel, to believe as they? Not so. We wish to find a reason for love, for value, for admiration, for any strong positive emotion; and when we find an emotion shared, we think we have found the reason for it. But the task of life is to find the true reasons, not the false ones, to escape from mass suggestion and the wish-world to the suggestions of reality. Hence the need of the passion for truth, because it alone trains our emotion, attaches it to the right themes, and so finally gives us emotional satisfaction as well.

XIII

On Irreconcilables

I SUPPOSE there have always been irreconcilables. Diogenes was one, in practice as well as in theory, for he did live in his tub and asked of Alexander only that he would not stand between him and the sunlight. And there were the eremites, Christians and others, who preferred the wilderness to the wickedness of human society. All these we can respect because they did act their rebellion and were thorough and practical rebels. But nowadays we have a kind of irreconcilable who enjoys a theoretic rebellion but suffers no practical discomfort from it—a Diogenes, without a tub and usually with an unearned income, who can find nothing good in the civilization, which secures him so much leisure to abuse it. Him I do not despise—often he is very amusing—but I do resent a little his airs of superiority. During the war he was usually a pacifist. If he went to prison, well and good; his rebellion was practical; and it is clear that, if

there were enough of such practical rebels whenever a war broke out, there would soon be no more wars. That is the logic of the pacifist who is ready to suffer for his pacifism ; and it makes militarists very angry because they have no answer to it. But there were other irreconcilable pacifists above military age who were not, I think, consistent in their rebellion against society ; because, while they abused it for the war which only its permanent iniquities made possible, they continued to enjoy an unearned income which also was made possible only by those iniquities. You may, practically, rebel against war as the particular iniquity which needs most to be resisted at the moment ; that is what the C.O. did, and suffered for it ; but you have no right to a theoretic and Platonic rebellion against war if you are not also a pacifist where your own private interests are concerned. For the pacifist position, if consistent, is not only against war ; it is against every kind of force—against the policeman as well as the soldier ; and a well-to-do pacifist ought not to employ the policeman to protect his property. This, you may say, is going too far ; but the pacifist, who objects to war on principle, prides himself on going as far as possible. He cannot deny that war may be an attempt to do justice by force ; his position

is that justice ought never to use force ; therefore he ought never to employ a policeman, nor ought he to profit by the existence of the police, even if he finds no occasion to employ them. That is to say, if he has any private property of his own, he ought to give it up ; for, as long as he keeps it, he is consenting to the iniquity of our society which employs force so that some people may live on the labour of others.

I am not condemning the theoretic pacifist because he is not entirely consistent in his actions—nobody is. What I do condemn is the satisfaction he gets from the contemplation of his own theoretic consistency, which remains easy because it is theoretic. He lives permanently, I think, in that state of delusion to which we are all subject at times—the delusion that we are spectators and judges of life, whereas, in fact, we are necessarily actors in it. To him our society is a kind of performance which he has paid to watch, and he thinks very poorly of it ; he can imagine a much better entertainment and can perhaps even sketch it on paper. But, really, he has paid no money to watch it ; nor is he watching it ; he is, whether he will or no, playing his own part in it, like all the rest of us ; and he has no right to judge and condemn it. If there are iniquities, he is as much responsible for

them as most other people; and he cannot escape from that responsibility by feeling angry or superior. The first difficulty of civilization, the chief obstacle to human progress, is the fact that the mass of ordinary, decent, human beings are so busy with their own work, which has to be done, or there would be an end of our society altogether, that they have little energy to consider or promote general reforms. We have more need of intellectual than of material capital—that is to say, of a surplus of mental energy which shall look beyond the needs of the day, shall discover the truth about things, and shall apply it to the common good; but intellectual capital is at present much rarer than material. My quarrel with the theoretic irreconcilable is that he pretends to be an intellectual capitalist; but, if he has any intellectual capital, he wastes it in mere abuse. I do not ask him to sell all that he has and give to the poor; but I do maintain that, if he condemns our society and all who consent to it, he ought, at least, to spend the leisure which that society allows him in a serious attempt to discover a remedy for it. It would be a dull and laborious task, perhaps; but, if he prefers an amusing life, then he gets his amusement from society as it is, and he has no right to abuse it. Above all, he has no right to pride himself upon his

theoretic consistency if, in practice, he remains utterly inconsistent.

Perhaps you will say that in all this I am attacking a figment of my own, there are very few of these theoretic irreconcilables, and that they matter very little. But, in fact, we all have a tendency to be theoretic irreconcilables, and our books and newspapers are full of Platonic rebellion. It is one of the ways in which we waste our intellectual capital and our moral energy. We all, for instance, talk about the prevailing ugliness; but we spend little money or thought in trying to mitigate it. The mere talk makes us feel that we have superior taste; and the world is full of people with superior taste, while our streets and our homes remain as ugly as ever. Again, we complain of the state of the press, which indeed is a public danger; but we ourselves read the newspapers we despise; and, while we abuse them, our opinions, our tastes, our whole view of life even, is perverted by them. In theory we are not to be reconciled to the press; in practice it lives on us. We pay ourselves with words and consume our energy in a rebellion which ends in mere irritability.

This irritability produces no change and merely lessens our own happiness. If we would be happier and less confused in our

minds, we ought, I think, to ask ourselves what is our real attitude to the present state of society. Do we consent to it, or do we not? Is it to us the best that can be contrived, human beings, including ourselves, being what they are; or is it a damnable corruption and perversion of what should, and might, be? We ought to come to a decision on this point and then act on our decision. I do not say what our decision ought to be; that is a point for each individual, and not an easy one. Our society is full of delightful people and things, and of useful and promising institutions. It may be that it suffers only from the defects of its qualities. But, if that is so, why flatter yourself that you are superior to it? Why rebel in theory when you do not rebel in practice? For, so long as you accept it in action and in fact, you are helping to make it what it is. You are like the shareholder of a railway who complains that it is incompetent and oppressive both to the public and to its own servants, yet continues to draw his dividends. Or you are like that gentleman in Ibsen's play who went about upholding the banner of the Ideal, which meant saying, Ugh! Ugh! to anything that was done. Society is made by what is done, not by saying, Ugh! Ugh! and so long as we get our living by what is done, we ourselves are doing it. If we are

uneasy in our consciences about it all, we cannot ease them by saying, Ugh! Ugh! We may get a momentary relief that way, but we cannot attain to happiness. Happiness, when youth is past, comes of a conviction that the order of the universe is rational; and we can attain to that only by behaving rationally ourselves. But theoretic rebellion, with practical submission, is not rational; the two together only make us peevish, and the best we can do with our peevishness is to express it in epigrams, which are like fireworks; they drive no wheels and do not even burn the house down. You may be happy if you decide that society is, on the whole, good, and that you will enjoy it without doing harm to your neighbours—that is the attitude of much delightful comedy. Or you may be happy if you decide that society is bad, and that you will give your life to changing it. But you cannot be happy if the theoretic half of you rebels and the practical part consents; for then your whole life is a makeshift, and your grumbling at society is really a grumbling at yourself for putting up with it. You nag; but the nagging is within you; there is a cat-and-dog life in your own soul, an expense of spirit in a waste of shame; for all the while you are ashamed of yourself for this contrast and conflict between the theoretical and

practical parts of you. You may grow used to your shame, but, if you do, you grow used to unhappiness, and that is failure indeed. We all envy, even while we rail at, the great, boisterous, successful men of the world; but they are wiser than we are. They have consented to our society, and they get their strength, their high spirits even, from their consent. We look to see them put to shame and brought to naught; but they are not. They have their own notion of reality and act upon it; hence their energy, whether for good or for evil. We have no right to think ourselves superior to them merely because of an internal conflict which robs us of energy; if we would be superior to them, we must be saints, at one with ourselves, like them, but in the practical refusal of all that they value.

XIV

The Religion of Capital

ONE is sometimes made suddenly aware of a change by the absurdity of some one or something that has refused to change; just as there are exceptions that prove the rule, so the obsolete may illustrate progress. Thus I read lately an article upon the dignity of work, which complained that work for its own sake—in fact, drudgery—had lost its dignity and value for the mass of men. In the past the writer said every one knew that drudgery was necessary, and man took some pride in doing it thoroughly; but now every one is impatient of it. And he longed for a return of the simple peasant virtues, without even asking why there was this impatience of drudgery, why the simple peasant virtues do not seem even virtues to the mass of industrial workers.

Reading this, I saw there was something obsolete in the thought of the writer; but what was it? Suddenly the answer came to me, and it was this. In the past, until the Industrial Revolution, men took it for granted

that drudgery for the mass of mankind was necessary. It was indeed a plain fact that most men must drudge all their lives if the necessaries of life were to be produced. Hence the dignity and value of the peasant virtues. Upon them depended the very existence of society, which always had but little energy to spare beyond its daily and urgent task. This fact was recognized by the peasants themselves, and by every kind of hard worker. Whatever political change there might be, it could make no difference, nor abolish drudgery for them, and so drudgery had a dignity in the eyes of all mankind because it was necessary. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground." That was the command of God or of necessity; and the legend of the Fall was but an explanation of a fact accepted by all men; and it remained, not an evil to be overcome, a problem to be solved, but a condition of being, like the attraction of gravity. The peasant tilling his own plot of land was the type of all workers; and, because men always try to make the best of necessity, they saw dignity and beauty in the peasant's life and work; they painted him and made poems about him, as if to console him and themselves for the necessity of toil.

Further, just because all acknowledged the necessity of toil for the mass of men, there was

no continuing or cumulative resentment against the few who escaped from that necessity. Their escape was but a piece of good fortune ; it did not hinder the solution of a common problem ; if they had not escaped, there would still be the same necessity for the mass of men ; and the amount of work which the fortunate might have done, if they had not been fortunate, would have made little difference. They were merely fortunate, and every one else would have shared their good fortune if he could. True, Christ said that it was hard for those who had riches to enter the Kingdom of Heaven ; and there were always those who agreed with Him not out of mere envy ; but the mass of mankind did not agree with Him, did not understand the prophetic truth of His saying. In fact, just as they idealized necessity in the peasant, so they idealized the escape from necessity in the noble. These were the two romantic classes all through the ages, and even Aristotle's ideal man is ideal, because he has escaped from the necessity of toil. His virtues are the result of that escape ; he enters the Kingdom of Heaven because he has possessions, and he could not exist nor could he cultivate his peculiar virtues but for the toil of the mass of mankind. So it seemed to me that the writer about the dignity of work was still in Aristotle's state of mind ;

perhaps he saw himself as Aristotle's ideal man, and he was naturally ready to value the humble virtues which made his own possible.

But since the Industrial Revolution, the mass of workers are not of Aristotle's state of mind, and they are not prepared to admire either his ideal man or those humble virtues which make him possible. To them the noble man, the person who has by good fortune escaped from the common necessity of toil, is no longer even romantic, nor is the peasant romantic, and for this simple reason, that they no longer believe in the necessity of drudgery for the mass of mankind. The legend of the Fall of man has no longer any meaning for them whatever ; they do not believe in it as a version of the truth any more than they believe in it as an historical fact. The Industrial Revolution has altered their conception of necessity ; and that is why the modern world is afflicted, or blessed, with an unrest from which it cannot escape.

It has been said that with Christianity an immense hope traversed the world. With the Industrial Revolution another hope as immense dawned, and has been growing ever since. It still remains only a hope, and that is why it has produced a growing exasperation ; for the mass of mankind will not forgo it when once they have seen it. And they are peculiarly exasperated with religion, because

religion, professing to come from Him who used those words about the rich man, tells them that their hope is merely material and so baseless, that they must find a compensation for it in despair of this world, and the expectation of another. But they know that this hope of theirs is really religious, is not in conflict with the Christianity of Christ, but is rather the application of that, in a world with greater power over things, and so with a hope, an opportunity, that the early Christians never dreamt of. For what did the Industrial Revolution promise, if it promised anything at all, except the abolition of the curse of Adam. Suddenly, or rather gradually, men saw what it might mean, namely, that the old compulsion of toil was not a command of God or even a law of nature, but merely the result of man's impotence, which was passing. Still, of course, there remained the need to work, but out of the ages of hand-to-mouth unorganized toil there was emerging at last a new power, to which was given the name of capital—a power in which all might share, and which might free all from the old necessity of unceasing toil.

There have been many definitions of capital, and they in their differences make the gradual advance of human thought towards an understanding of the true nature of capital, that it is the reserve of surplus energy, over and

above what is needed for the hand-to-mouth satisfaction of the wants of mankind; and further, that this surplus energy becomes capital only when it is employed to make that satisfaction less hand to mouth. But the second clause, how surplus energy and power becomes capital, is still only dimly understood. We talk as if all surplus energy and power were capital, no matter how it may be misused or wasted; or as if it were capital only if used for material ends. We have not yet grasped the fact that capital is most completely capital when used for spiritual ends; man would escape from the struggle for life, not merely so that he may be free from the struggle for life, so that he may lie in the sun and eat and sleep; he is of such a nature that he must either use his leisure for spiritual ends, or misuse it in material excess. When he does the former, his reserve of surplus energy is capital; when the latter, it is not. So capital is capital only when it is used finally for spiritual ends. Otherwise it is waste, which produces greater material poverty than if it had never existed.

All this may seldom be clearly stated; but the mass of workers are not satisfied with any other use or meaning of capital; and because they see it used otherwise and defined otherwise, they often think of capital as the enemy, and talk of capitalists as those who waste and

misuse capital. But behind all the talk and exasperation there remains the hope, however baffled, that capital, if rightly used, may save the world, and the refusal to put up with any society in which it is misused or wasted. Very slowly there is growing a religion of capital, though it has never yet been called by that name—a religion different from all religions of the past, because the hope out of which it has been born is different from all past hopes, because the Industrial Revolution has made men dream of a kingdom of heaven not distinct from the kingdom of this world but to be realized in it.

Is this religion material? It seems so only to those who do not understand what capital truly is, namely, surplus energy and power used for the spiritual ends of mankind. Only in the modern world have we grasped the fact, or begun to grasp it, that all kinds of material energy and power may be used for spiritual ends; and that they are not capital until they are so used. We are just escaping from the old notion of evolution, that it was a ceaseless material or mechanical pressure upon all living things moulding them all into some meaningless shape. We begin to see now that it is a freeing of the potentialities that exist in all life, a giving of opportunity, in fact, and finally of opportunity to the spirit. When men discovered fire they were not made or

moulded by the discovery; they were freed by it, freed for the realization of spiritual desires of which the discovery perhaps made them aware for the first time. And so it is with all inventions. If good, they are all liberating to the spirit, and, if they do not liberate, then either they are bad or misused, as we misuse aeroplanes to drop bombs on each other. And as evolution is liberation, so capital, a great new factor in evolution, is or ought to be liberating, or it is not capital. And men, having felt the hope of its liberating power, will not be content with any use of it that does not liberate.

Hence our unrest, our impatience of drudgery and, above all, our impatience of the rich who continue to enjoy their riches like the nobles and superior persons of the past. They were endured, idealized even, because the hope of capital had not yet traversed the world. They were merely fortunate, and men were always inclined to impute their good fortune to their merit. But now all men see that capital exists or may exist; that there is a reserve of surplus energy that might be used to set mankind free for the exercise of their spiritual activities; and more and more the misuse of this energy becomes a crime, becomes the needless frustration of the common hope of mankind. Christianity itself prepared men's minds for this hope and for

this exasperation ; it destroyed the notion of a natural essential difference between the high and the low—we can hear the rapture of that liberating thought in the Magnificat. And Christianity did this because it asserted that all men had immortal souls and an aim and a destiny beyond material circumstance. The way was thus prepared for the religion of capital as the liberating power to be employed in the liberation of all mankind's immortal souls, though often, by a strange inconsistency, that religion is often passionately denied by those who profess Christianity, but is professed by those who deny the immortality of the soul. But none the less these are exasperated by that perversion of Christianity which would deny them their hope and offer them another; that, no doubt, is why they deny the immortality of the soul ; it means to them a red herring drawn by the priests and the rich across the scent to put off the pursuers of the true Kingdom of Heaven in this world.

Nothing indeed is so dangerous in our time as the hostility of the most religious to existing religion, and the hostility of existing religion to the most religious. Only in religion can men be reconciled ; without it they see each other as hostile packs ; for religion is the sense of the Absolute in which alone men can be reconciled by transcending

circumstance in their aims. But when religion is presented as an ideal, which is an unvalued ideal, and when the most religious—those with most sense of the absolute and transcendent—repudiate religion, then there is a confusion and trouble in the human mind which leads to blind violence of action. The best in men makes them do the worst; they are like thwarted lovers who would kill what they love.

Ever since the French Revolution, those who desire change have been becoming more revolutionary, with a larger hope and a deeper disgust. There have been political revolutions, like the English, like the successive French, but it becomes more and more clear that all of these are really of the same nature as those palace revolutions under the Roman Empire which changed nothing except the Emperor. The Romans never saw that their trouble was not political but economic; but more and more we begin to see that our trouble is always economic and that no political changes will end it. You may expel one kind of man from your government offices and put in another, you may reject one party of politicians and accept another; and it is all like the murdering of one emperor and the electing of another. The desired change cannot be made by politicians, because they do not know how to make it, nor by government

officials, for they cannot apply the power at the right point. The power is capital, the reserve of surplus energy, and that is not controlled or understood by politicians or by government officials. In Russia now there is a revolution far greater than ever before, an economic revolution; but the right people are not managing it. Capital is being wasted worse than in the most capitalist society, because politicians and officials are trying to apply it, and they do not know how. The power requisite is necessarily in the hands of the workers and organizers; they and they alone can turn surplus energy into capital; they alone can solve the economic problem; and in Russia now they are subject to ignorant blunderers, to men who would drive a machine without understanding the mechanism. Sooner or later the Russian Revolution will increase a hundredfold that impatience of politics and politicians which is growing in all countries with political experience. In Russia Lenin and Trotsky have taken the place of the Czar, as in Rome Severus took the place of a series of incompetents; but Severus could not change the economic evils of the Empire any more than Commodus—he could only keep order; and more and more Lenin and Trotsky are being reduced to the same function, because neither they nor their

officials can create or control capital. The Russian Revolution was the result of the great hope and the great exasperation of the modern world; but the one thing it has utterly failed to do is to create or control or apply a surplus of power. The Bolshevists can declare a class war; they can cut off heads and issue edicts, like a new Roman Emperor; but just as the most energetic Emperor did more harm than Commodus or Nero, because he did not understand the mechanism he tried to work, so it is with Lenin and Trotsky. They, like all other politicians and officials, must fail, because they have not grasped the religion of capital which alone now can save the world.

The religion of capital is a new religion, although based upon the principles of Christianity, because it is the result of a hope that came into being only with the Industrial Revolution. That revolution so increased the productive powers of mankind that all men, even the poorest drudges, began to hope for a deliverance from the necessity of drudgery. It was clear that mechanical discoveries had given to mankind a new reserve of surplus energy, which, if only it could be rightly applied, would give to all men leisure and well-being. Never before in the history of the world had this seemed possible. The magnificence of Rome was based, not on any increase

of production for all, but on slavery—that is to say, on the utter and hopeless subjection of one class to another. Nothing could be hoped for from slavery but the sacrifice of some men to others, a splendour above and a squalor below; and the splendid consented to this sacrifice, not because it satisfied their consciences, but because it seemed to them part of the nature of things, the best that men could do to make a civilization. But no religion can be based on slavery, and the highest religion could only ignore it, as Christianity did for so many centuries. At bottom society was hard and irrational, based upon wrong; and this underlying wrong perverted thought and religion always, made a mockery of Christianity itself, and undermined the Roman power, until it crumbled and made way for a much more primitive and poorer society. In that society there was more violence but less underlying wrong, because the proportion of those who lived on the toil of others was smaller. But still this was achieved only by a return to barbarism, and in that barbarism the mass of men had to drudge harder than ever, consenting to their drudgery as a law of nature. Now and again they rose blindly against some intolerable wrong, and burnt and slew and pillaged, but these risings were sporadic; there was no cumulative growing sense of injustice or

mismanagement, nor did religion ever connect itself permanently with the economic problem, because that was not so much a problem as a pressure, and religion remained a compensation and a consolation. The Kingdom of Heaven was never conceived as something to be realized here and now.

Then came, slowly at first, and afterwards swiftly, the Industrial Revolution and, as it took men by surprise, so it was mismanaged, and the worst men profited by it most. But, however much they might profit, the poor were not reconciled to their profiting, and the exasperation of the poor has grown ever since with their baffled hopes. The Industrial Revolution, we all know, ought to have meant a freeing of the spirit of man for spiritual tasks. In fact it has meant the multiplying of material tasks and of material possessions. Nor has any political change been able to prevent this vicious process. The politicians talk and get great rewards for their talking, but they do nothing because they are not the men who can do anything. The omnipotent Lenin and Trotsky can do no more than opportunist demagogues in the West. The freeing, if it is ever to happen, must be achieved not by political changes but within the industries themselves, and it must be achieved by the power of the religion of capital working in those industries.

XV

The Millennium

THE idea of the Millennium is natural to religion, and springs up naturally in the religious mind. It is not a dogma, or even a belief, so much as a vision—a vision which men see inevitably when their minds attain to a certain pitch of religious intensity. It is not peculiarly part of the Christian faith, but rather a kind of music to which the passion for the Absolute rises whenever it is strong enough. It comes into modern poetry just as it comes into Isaiah or Ezekiel or the Apocalypse. We find it in Blake and Shelley and William Morris, one of them notorious in his time as an Atheist, the other in all formal belief a complete sceptic. "Prometheus Unbound" indeed is nothing but an Apocalypse. When the Dragon Jupiter is bound, the whole nature of the universe changes, and the whole universe breaks into music over the change. It is not a change merely in the mind of man but in matter itself, which ceases to be dead and

comes to life as if it were all spirit. So the moon ceases to be a dead world and sings its own song of resurrection:

"And living shapes upon my bosom move:
Music is in the sea and air,
Winged clouds soar here and there,
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of:
'Tis love, all love!"

And the earth answers to the moon:

"Oh, gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight
Falls on me like thy clear and tender light
Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night,
Through isles for ever calm:
Oh, gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
The caverns of my pride's deep universe,
Charming the tiger joy, whose tramplings fierce
Made wounds which need thy balm."

But stranger still is the case of William Morris who, in his poem "Iceland," rises suddenly and, as it seems, unconsciously, into a vision of the Millennium, into the language of prophecy:

"Ah, when thy Balder comes back, and bears
from the heart of the Sun
Peace and the healing of pain, and the wisdom
that waiteth no more;
And the lilies are laid on thy brow mid the
crown of the deeds thou hast done;
And the roses spring up by thy feet that the
rocks of the wilderness wore. . . ."

I quote these examples because they show how natural to the mind of man, or to the

mind of the poet, is this idea of the Millennium. These poets were not echoing any religious formula. Their minds of their own accord rose to this pitch of vision, and it was not connected in them with any religious belief, certainly not with any Christian dogma.

But in Shelley the idea of the Millennium is more complete than in any religious writer, just because he does not believe in the orthodox Millennium as a separate place. In his Millennium the universe itself turns into Heaven, and evil of all kinds disappears from it, as if it has been an ugly fancy of the mind. Not only does the lion lie down with the lamb, but there is no more any poison. There is a harmony in all matter as well as in all spirit. Matter becomes, as it were, the medium of an artist in which his spirit is perfectly expressed. The whole universe is like the words of a poet or the notes of a musician, all beautiful in its obedience to his will.

And this is the idea latent in all visions of the Millennium. Everything, no less than all people, must share in it. The rivers will run down to the sea, their home, rejoicing, or as a great piece of music runs to its appointed end. It is found in the Note to the "Ancient Mariner."

> "In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and

> everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country, and their own natural home, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected, and yet there is silent joy at their arrival."

It comes at the height of the horror as a sudden release. It is the vision of the Millennium that comes to men when they are wrought up to a pitch, and they can only be wrought to it by trouble.

Everything is suddenly aware of it and becomes harmoniously expressed; it is a universal homecoming; the gates open wide, the music crashes, the parted are united, the snows melt, the mists flee away.

"Candidus insuetum miratur limen Olympi,
Sub pedibusque videt nubes et sidera Daphnis."

VIRGIL.

"There entertain him all the saints above
In solemn troops and sweet societies
That sing, and singing in their glory move
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes."

MILTON.

"All thy old woes shall now smile on thee
And thy pains set bright upon thee:
All thy sorrows here shall shine
And thy sufferings be divine
Tears shall take comfort, and turn gems,
And wrongs repent to diadems."

CRASHAW

The imagery is material, people say; but it is not imagery, for matter shares in the Millennium and is purified like the soul of its discords, hostility, inexpressiveness.

But men have this vision of the Millennium most clearly when they are most wrought upon by trouble. There comes a sudden release to the mind. It escapes from the tyranny of the present into prophecy or into a vision of reality. So it is in the Note in the "Ancient Mariner"; and it was so also with Shelley and Morris. Shelley rose out of his troubled life to his vision. Morris rose out of his divine discontent with the present order. And for him it is Iceland herself that gives him the vision of the Millennium because his mind was full of her present desolation and of all her tragic stories.

One might explain it all prosaically as a mere reaction of the mind from present trouble, an attempt to get relief from fact in fiction. To Nietzsche it would be his will to power, gaining through a dream the power to resist reality, a kind of self-hypnotizing or auto-suggestion. But these prosaic suggestions are the psychology of the outsider, of one who has not experienced what he explains. They are one expression of the truth, but an expression which leaves out most of its content which can be known only

to the experiencer. They are, in fact, a mere formula like the term Absolute, and no religious experience can be explained or expressed in a formula.

For one thing, we have to explain the fact which is inexplicable, that this notion of the Millennium does arise naturally in the religious mind when it rises to a certain pitch. It is not merely a myth handed down: it is born again like religion itself, new born like the inspirations of art. It is a form naturally taken by poetry, a vision that visits the mind whenever the mind is prepared for it. Wherever there is a strong passion for the Absolute much thwarted by the facts of life, out of the conflict arises this vision of the Millennium, not in minds credulous or superstitious, not as a formal belief, but as a reality of another state of being to which the mind may turn; and it is always the same reality. It is, in fact, subject to some unknown law like the laws of music or of rhythmical speech. But the man who experiences feels that he is half in this world of ordinary experience and half in another which is now estranged from it. The Millennium is the sudden harmony of these worlds, expressed necessarily in the terms of this world.

If this other world is a mere delusion, an auto-suggestion created by the will to power,

how does man have the power of creating it? What is this miracle that he can perform for himself and for other men, making a harmony between the mere chaos of discordant reality and this other world which is not? If there is no such other world, how does he conceive of it or of any kind of order and harmony at all? What is this power in him of value, of desire, of grief, of joy, of anything beyond physical pain or pleasure? Why the will to power itself, when there cannot be power in chaos, or anything but life itself at the mercy of chaotic circumstances?

That way we explain nothing, for our explanation is that there is none—in which case why begin an explanation? But here I am not trying to explain, but only to express; I am only protesting against explanation which empties a reality of all its richness of content and makes a mere formula of it.

It is a fact that the mind of man conceives of a Millennium naturally, and does so, not in primitive darkness, but at the height of its power, not as a fairy story for its own childishness, but with complete and passionate imaginative seriousness.

XVI

Eritrichium Nanum

I WOKE and I was at the gate of a garden. I smelt the daisies and the pansies, and once again their scent utterly satisfied me, as it did when I was a child and bought their roots off a barrow, and for a few moments, whilst my face was pressed against their petals, complete unending happiness seemed to be mine.

Inside the gate I saw the gardener holding a well-shaped trowel in one hand, and in the other a plant of that mountain forget-me-not which I had once seen but never grown.

We talked easily together, as people can who are fond of the same things. He seemed, unlike most gardeners, who wish to do things only in their own way, to have the feeling I have sometimes had, that a plant could almost tell one where it wished to grow. So we planted the forget-me-not together. I had never before been quite satisfied with the hole I made for a plant, or with the way I spread out its innumerable delicate roots ; still

less with the way anyone else did it ; but this time we did it perfectly, and then I saw, too, for the first time, a plant in absolutely the right place. I turned to praise him, and said, "Surely it could not have been better planted by God Himself" : then I knew Him, and I was at home in the midst of the multitudinous hosts of Heaven ; and loneliness, boredom, and home-sickness were over now and for ever.

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